

Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem

Bölcsészettudományi Kar

DOKTORI DISSZERTÁCIÓ

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Recent (Re)workings of (Post-)Victorian Fiction (Posztviktoriánus regényátiratok)

Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola

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Budapest, 2011

Recent (Re)workings of (Post-)Victorian Fiction

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Introduction

Why does the Victorian age still excite so much interest in contemporary Britain? How does this phenomenon appear in contemporary literature? What aspects of the past receive attention and in whose favour do they get reformulated? In what ways may these rewritings influence various sites of cultural production from theoretical thought to marketing strategies? In this dissertation I survey such questions with a special focus on novelistic refashionings of the nineteenth century as a significant trend in postmodern literature from the 1960s to the present day. Out of the ever-growing body of such novels¹ about thirty pieces get a mention in this work ranging from the first two classics Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) through Booker Prize winners of the eighties and the nineties such as Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988) or A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) to most recent rewritings like Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006) and Gaynor Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008). These texts exhibit diverse appropriations of Victorian authors, fictional characters, novels, conventions and motifs, all assisting in establishing correspondences between the past and the present in various ways.

This set of postmodern fiction summons a variety of critical approaches mainly depending on the chronological and topical foci of the novels. Interestingly, the analysis of such texts has acquired a position in recent histories of Victorian literature, usually towards the end of such collections like the last two papers in *Writing and Victorianism* edited by J.B. Bullen (1997) and in *Rereading Victorian fiction* edited by Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (2000). This proves both that some nineteenth-century texts are hardly read without their postmodern revisions and that fiction has become a legitimate tool of scholarly interpretation functioning in an interspersed way with other modes of critical analysis,² which are developments made ample use of in this dissertation. One such additional

¹ In the *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* (also referred to as NVS) there is a list of 17 novels of this type published within just a few months of the 2008/2009 season (NVS 2.1: 196-197). The corpus of this dissertation is limited to the most prominent or representative items of the abundance of texts; items that can best indicate the discussed trends and tendencies within this field of study.

² Malcolm Bradbury already saw signs of this intermingling of fiction and criticism in the early nineties but still phrased it as a desirable future step: "literary theory or criticism may well begin striving to recover its intimacy with the creative, with the experimental nature of writing and its exploration of things imagined, or fictive" (Boylan 1993: 61)

analytical context for Victorian fiction appears to be film and media studies, as the last paper in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2005) edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing illustrates, where contemporary film and television adaptations of Victorian novels enhance the understanding of the source texts. Indeed, Victorianists trying to make sense of postmodern rewritings of nineteenth-century material understand such endeavours as various new entry points into Victorianism, not establishing a new field of research but stretching the boundaries of the existing one of Victorian studies (Llewellyn 2008: 165, 168).

Analysing contemporary fictional responses to Victorian texts from a postmodern perspective, critical literature utilises a number of discourses. Christian Gutleben in his *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001) tackles novels exclusively and categorises them as a specific subgenre of postmodern fiction, which status they have eventually achieved in the field of contemporary literary studies. Other collections of essays discuss fictional texts within a wider spectrum of cultural production and reproduction. In *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary British Literature and Film* (2004) edited by Susana Onega and Christian Gutleben and in Cora Kaplan's *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (2007) heritage film also features as a component in discussing (re)canonisation; while *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time* (2002) edited by Christine L. Krueger and *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000) edited by John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff additionally include theatre, photography, architecture, teaching, science, technology and different forms of living as further frameworks in which Victorian influence on the present day can be discussed. The variety of discourses applied to the phenomenon of readdressing nineteenth-century texts indicates its popularity as well as its present-day theoretical relevance.

Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture (2008) edited by Penny Gay, Judith Johnston and Catherine Waters marks a recent attempt to discuss Victorian novels together with their rewritings, promoting the co-existence of Victorianist and postmodernist perspectives of reading: "In bringing together essays that address both Victorian writings and their afterlives, this volume differs from the other recent collections devoted to Victorian afterlives alone" (Johnston and Waters 2008: 10). Yet, this endeavour seems to fail here as there is a lack of correspondence between the two, quite

disproportionate, parts of the collection leaving the potential of the establishment of topical relationships as well as a possible dialogue between the chronologically opposite approaches largely untapped. One of the underlying reasons behind this failure may be an apparent uncertainty of audience, whether the collection is intended for Victorianist or post-Victorianist readers or both. The problem of not paying proper attention to defining readership and the resulting inconsistent provision of contextual information are also pointed out by another critic of this volume (Llewellyn 2008/2009: 158) writing for the *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies*, a recently established journal devoted to clarifying “possible generic, chronological, and aesthetic boundaries” (Kohlke 2008: 2) of research, in other words, dealing with exactly the problem specified.

Since the research interest in the post-Victorian phenomenon is relatively new, the dimensions of current rewritings of Victorian narratives and the critical apparatus for reviewing them still lack comprehensive reflection. My dissertation aims to fill these gaps by systematising the existing knowledge about the subject in the following way. First, I juxtapose competing theoretical perspectives that are available for the contextualisation of postmodern fictional responses to Victorian texts. Second, I discuss the major ideological frameworks according to which these novels are produced and received. Third, through a case study of a novelistic chain of three closely linked texts I survey how these discourses have functioned historically. Finally, I indicate present and possible future thematic and generic trends of inquiring into rewriting the past. My work is structured into four chapters, making use of critical material including the above-introduced field-specific studies as well as a number of fictional examples for illustrative, intertextual or close reading purposes.

Chapter 1, “From *Victorian* to *Post-Victorian*: Definitions, Terminology, Contexts” is dedicated to the clarification of the theoretical background of the field of research, helping to provide both a narrower and a wider context for contemporary novelistic responses to the Victorian age. After delineating the main characteristics of postmodern rewritings, I juxtapose and analyse the competing concepts and definitions used to describe them. The exploration starts with the core term *Victorian*, which is often applied without taking into consideration its complex semantic field. Both its denotative and connotative aspects are discussed and the latter is exemplified with narrative samples from Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992). Then, I scrutinise various appropriations of the core word to describe

current texts and inquire into the meaning and implications of the emerging terms *Victoriana*, *Victoriographies*, *retro-*, *neo-* and *post-Victorian fiction*. I argue that to date *post-Victorian* appears the most appropriate term to characterise this specific group of novels as a separate entity within the larger body of historical fiction it belongs to. A survey of contexts and discourses of the post-Victorian novel follows, briefly reviewing literature on the subject in the fields of literary-, film- and cultural studies, pointing towards the interdisciplinarity of research. The interaction of the production and reception of nineteenth-century fiction with the novel as a genre reinvigorates certain terms like *prequel* and *sequel* to characterise contemporary adaptations and appropriations, marking the return of the sequelisation and serialisation of novelistic texts. I demonstrate on Lloyd Jones' *Mister Pip* the way the prioritisation of these writing and reading modes affects the tactics and ethics of rewriting as well as reading habits. Such changes influence the way post-Victorian fiction ties in with postmodernism by showing tendencies to juxtapose opposites as well as refocus referentiality and historical knowledge. Finally, I investigate reasons for the popularity of rewriting Victorian fiction, suggesting that post-Victorian fiction functions as an instrument to recognise or even facilitate change; therefore its reading is worthwhile devoting increasing research space to.

The authorship and readership of post-Victorian fiction often overlap resulting in self-conscious criticism. Therefore, the literary scene this body of works is set in deserves a closer examination, which constitutes the first section of Chapter 2. I study actors of the literary marketplace including the author, the reader and criticism. In the market of post-Victorian fiction the author, both as a novelistic function and as a real-life celebrity, proves to reacquire its nineteenth-century status, thereby causing the simultaneous reactivation of the author-reader relationship on various platforms of the meet-the-author-culture. Reading clubs digesting novels in instalments for the sensation of the plot are also found to re-enliven habits of Victorian audiences. By tracing book cover designs and introducing how literary criticism makes use of visual culture for its own purposes, I demonstrate that post-Victorian novels and their critique are especially prone to bridging high and low culture as well as academic and popular discourses. This tendency enhances a reading of such fiction in the framework of cultural studies, also implying social, political and ethical responsibilities of critical praxes. In the second part of the chapter I focus on such cultural criticism, in particular on the ways fictional and critical texts address nineteenth-century

colonial and imperial legacies forging identities (self, national and cultural) of the eighties, nineties and the present. The collapse of the British Empire and the successive devolution of power acknowledged by the eighties have incited various reactions. One typical response illustrated by Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) was resignation and admittance to colonial guilt. In contrast, the other reaction, mainly promoted by Thatcherism and maintained by New Labour, materialising in enterprise culture and heritage industry, emphasised progress and prosperity reactivating Victorian imperial narratives as David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) or A.S. Byatt's *Possession* commemorate. In these works as well as in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* and Swift's *Ever After* (1992) another form of political and cultural anxiety can be observed, that of reverse colonisation. This search for narratives of identification in the eighties and the nineties using (post)colonial and (post)imperial frameworks continues into the millennium; however, its accents seem to be changing by the acquisition of more creative dimensions as I demonstrate on the readings of Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*. Initially, the main critical focus was on how the imperial mission and national pride inspired by the Crystal Palace reverberates in heritage narratives of the eighties. Then attention shifted to how the Millennium Dome functions as a repetition of the Victorian construction in the nineties' political rhetoric. At present scholars read for cultural subtexts characterising the nineteenth-century Crystal Palace, such as the implications of the refractive qualities of glass the construction was made of. In addition to architectural mementoes, other cultural objects get juxtaposed with narratives of cultural memory that can be utilised as interpretive tools in post-Victorian novels such as photography in Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights* (2004) or literature in Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*. Being emblematic of tendencies in the literary market as well as for critical reactions to the legacies of the empire, the (Man) Booker Prize³ in its relationship to post-Victorian novels provides a meaningful connection between the literary scene and narratives of identity with the brief survey of which this chapter closes.

Connecting the Victorian and the contemporary perspectives, the analysis in Chapter 3, "*Jane Eyre* Tailor-Made: A Case Study of the *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Charlotte –*

³ The Booker Prize became the Man Booker Prize in 2002 since when it has been sponsored by the Man Group plc. For more information on The Man Booker Prize see: "Sponsor". 2008. <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/prize/about/sponsors>. References to the prize in this dissertation are used accordingly.

Adaptive Chain of Novels and Other Adaptations” aims to delineate the afterlife of Charlotte Brontë’s Victorian cult text *Jane Eyre* (1847) through two of its adaptations. I read all three writings in the contextual frameworks outlined in Chapter 2. The first novel, Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a prequel to the original text, often recognised as the first item of the post-Victorian canon, was begun in the 1920s and finished in the revolutionary sixties, thus exhibiting elements of the modernist as well as the postmodernist periods. The second piece, D. M Thomas’s *Charlotte* (2000) with its double plot and references to both previous texts, functions as a sequel to *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* constituting a postmodern metacommentary about ventriloquising earlier authors. First, based on the discussion of the literary scene in Chapter 2.1, I examine issues related to authorship in all three novels, establishing that with the proliferation of celebrity culture the notions of author, narrator and character are increasingly interrelated both in the texts and in their criticism. The authorial anxieties Rhys voices about capitalising on Brontë’s Victorian cult text become the accusation of the audience with regard to Thomas’s works, thus the offences of plagiarism, distasteful pornography and the abuse of history have stuck to his name ever since the publication of his *White Hotel* (1981), complemented by indictments concerning his exploitation of the literary market by choosing one of the most popular nineteenth-century novels as his object of rewriting in the case of *Charlotte*. Second, I inquire into narratives of identity in line with their theorisation in Chapter 2.2, through discourses of postcolonialism, postimperialism and the acknowledgement of feminism as an additional discursive perspective, establishing how characters’ dislocation of self and home escalates with time. Recent research has exposed that Jane of *Jane Eyre* speaks not only from the imperial centre completely ignoring colonial follies but also from a male drawing-room insensitive to other marginalised women, which limits the feminist achievements of her narrative. A similar problem qualifies the postcolonial merits of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, since readers are denied access to accounts of the local black population of the West-Indies. In *Charlotte* the two main narrative voices belong to white middle class women who travel to Martinique from England largely keeping the imperial view of the (ex-)colony as a place where they can explore their sexuality for example, though they also show some interest in the colonial perspective on historical events. Finally, I survey how the controversial plot resolution, character treatment or ending of *Jane Eyre* inspires adaptations like Emma Tennant’s *Adèle* (2002) or Jasper Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair* (2001) as well as rewritings of various motifs like that of the woman writer, the governess, plain

Jane or the madwoman in other texts, either paying homage or presenting corrective agendas to the Victorian novel.

After the diachronic analysis in the case study in Chapter 3, I draw a synchronic picture of the prevalent thematic and generic preferences in current post-Victorian fiction in Chapter 4. Having confirmed the paradox of repetition and reformation of Victorian tenets (Gutleben 2001, Kucich and Sadoff 2000), critics nowadays tend to organise their responses to the post-Victorian phenomenon according to topics and genre (Onega and Gutleben 2004, Kaplan 2007 and the thematic issues of NVS). The mostly post-millennial novels analysed in this chapter, indicate possible directions in which post-Victorian fiction is likely to expand. One of these is literary biography or biofiction tying in with the current fashion of celebrity culture impacting attitudes to authorship, the production and reception of literary texts as theorised in Chapters 1 and 2 as well as shown in its historicity in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, “The Future of the Post-Victorian Novel: Indications of Topic and Genre,” I explore attitudes to (auto)biographical writing and creative processes of (re)writing and (re)reading by way of a case study of a number of Henry James novels published around the same time including Emma Tennant’s *Felony* (2002), Colm Tóibín’s *The Master* (2004), David Lodge’s *Author Author* (2004), Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty* (2004) and Michiel Heyns’s *The Typewriter’s Tale* (2005). I also discuss another emerging category based on the continuing interest in postcolonial and postimperial rewriting of narratives of identity with a specific focus on travel, home and isolation: the category of *island fiction*. Theorised with the help of Simon Gikandi’s trope of travel (1996), eighteenth-century discovery journals and nineteenth-century travelogues, novels belonging to this category fictionalise anxieties about Britain’s coping with its colonial and imperial legacies connected to its own insularity and its relations with ex-colonial islands. I read Matthew Kneale’s *English Passengers* (2000) and Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge* (1991) in this framework of (mis)conceptions of home, self and other. The third trend observable among post-Victorian rewritings is the revival of the novel sequel. After providing a brief survey of Dickensiana, mostly concentrating on Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones’s *Mister Pip* working from the same source text: Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1861), I conduct a case study of Jasper Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair* which at the same time features as a sequel to Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and as a first item of a novel series following the adventures of a literary detective called Thursday Next. Fictionalising issues

related to authorship, originality, textual production and reception as well as (post)feminist, postimperial and postcolonial concerns, this novel shows how different sites of identification are problematised using devices of detective-, science-, utopian and dystopian fiction, yielding a text of an innovative generic mix.

As the whole post-Victorian phenomenon, this dissertation is also interdisciplinary, a feature that naturally affects its methodology, too. Post-Victorian fiction serves as its main focus, but since I address concerns of both literary and cultural studies it has instances of close reading of novels as well as analyses of cultural objects or sections of cultural criticism where fiction only assumes a support function to reading cultural narratives. The project's interdisciplinarity entails the necessary limitation of only briefly being able to immerse in certain areas of study, such as history, political science and media studies, as well as relatively new research fields, such as trauma studies or cultural memory, fields that are themselves referred to in various disciplines and the critical apparatus of which is still in the making; nevertheless, I consider their inclusion crucial for the understanding of the complexity and extent of the post-Victorian event. This way my account sometimes becomes a metacritical text rather than an analytical one, making the style of writing postmodern in the sense that it draws on various narratives with the purpose of indicating the map of connections within certain phenomena instead of surveying individual investigations in detail and applying their frameworks or theses to others in close reading. The reason for this working method is that such an attitude seems to provide more revealing results in the case of an area of study that still formulates its premises. Approaching the subject with this in mind, the option for further discussion on its tenets is left open, enabling more rigorous categorisations if necessary once the terminology, definitions and area specifications become somewhat crystallised. Alternatively, it may turn out that this eclectic narrative inquiry becomes a legitimate interpretive strategy as it is, allowing for the adoption of a more holistic perspective on connections between the post-Victorian phenomenon, fiction, culture and criticism rather than delimiting their reading to separate categories, modes of interpretation and disciplines.

With this dissertation I hope to contribute to an understanding of post-Victorian fiction as a vital and ever-growing part of the contemporary novelistic output in English. The body of novels I introduce and analyse well exemplifies postmodern theoretical concerns with

notions like authorship through the intermingling of critical discourses to the future of humanities, at the same time as voicing political and ideological anxieties connected to questions of identity and cultural memory. By addressing these concerns, post-Victorian novels rewrite and reactivate nineteenth-century cultural discourses which are currently in need of readjustment due to the unearthing of more textual material as well as the changes in the critical perception of narrative empowerment and canonisation which prompt rereading in the first place. Therefore, these texts not only serve as illustrations of today's problems, but may also supply means to possible future solutions. By following the interaction of the production of and critical responses to historical fiction, tendencies in interpreting present events that resonate with the past can be detected, which influence our perceptions of history and contemporaneity at the same time.

Chapter 1. From *Victorian* to *Post-Victorian*: Definitions, Terminology, Contexts⁴

“He invented an entire period and made its imagination his own: no one had properly understood the medieval world until Chatterton summoned it into existence. The poet does not merely recreate or describe the world. He actually creates it.”

Peter Ackroyd, *Chatterton* (1987)

In the event of a new (sub)discipline forming around the postmodern refashioning of the nineteenth century, there are some basic tenets that need clarification. Profound scholarship concerning the definition and terminology applied to postmodern fiction rewriting the Victorian novel and the possible discourses it can be contextualised in is still scarce. Therefore, the chapter begins by surveying the meanings attached to the term *Victorian* to foster the historical understanding of its semantic field. This is followed by an analysis of the existing denotations and definitions categorising postmodern rewrites of Victorian fiction, mostly based on various appropriations of the term *Victorian*. Ultimately, this should start a debate aimed at finding a suitable term and definition for this group of texts. The final part of the inquiry, examining the discursive contexts these novels appear in, is intended to provide an informative background for the ensuing discussion, pointing towards the emerging interdisciplinarity of the field.

A remarkable trend has emerged in British fiction from the 1960s up to the present day: the production of a significant number of novels and literary biographies which critically engage with the Victorian age and its narratives. In this chapter the following texts belonging to this subgenre, variously referred to in recent critical works as neo-, retro-, or post-Victorian literature are mentioned: Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Peter Carey’s *Oscar and Lucinda*, Peter Ackroyd’s *Chatterton* (1987) and *Dickens* (1990), A. S. Byatt’s *Possession*, Graham Swift’s *Ever After* (1992), Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things*, Beryl Bainbridge’s *Master Georgie* (1998), Matthew Kneale’s *English Passengers*, D. M. Thomas’s *Charlotte*, Jasper Fforde’s *The*

⁴ A previous version of this chapter with the title “(Re-)Workings of Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Definitions, Terminology, Contexts” was published in 2008, in NVS 1.1: 53-80. I have updated that version by generally integrating the most recent critical material and, in particular, by extending the interpretive frameworks of the “Contexts and Critical Discourses of Post-Victorian Fiction” section.

Eyre Affair and Colm Tóibín's *The Master*. All of these texts revoke and comment on Victorian narratives in various ways, both formally and thematically. Additionally, many of these recent works have themselves become canonised examples of such an endeavour.

These postmodern rewrites of Victorian texts keep the average length and structure of Victorian novels: the bulky 500 pages (ranging between 150 and 1000 pages) are usually divided into books or chapters, sometimes preceded by chapter summaries or epigraphs. They imitate prevalent genres of the nineteenth century, such as the *Bildungsroman*, or the social, industrial and sensation novels, creatively intermingled with conventions of the (auto)biographical and (pseudo)historical novels, thus creating a hybridity of genres abundant in parody and pastiche so characteristic of postmodern novelistic discourse. The narrative design of these novels tends to be like that of their Victorian predecessors⁷ and they typically employ narrative voices of the types dominant in nineteenth-century texts, that is, the first person character narrator or the third person omniscient one.

The plots of these rewrites either take place in the nineteenth century or span both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. They are usually set at least partly in England, most often in London or in the countryside. Set in the age of the British Empire, the geographical locations may also vary between the centre and the colonies or territories of national interest, such as the West-Indies, Australia or scenes of the Crimean War – and, in the case of twentieth-century plots, between England and its possible reverse coloniser,⁵ the United States. Thematically, the texts invoke typical Victorian controversies, such as the definition and status of science, religion, morals, nationhood and identity, and the (re)evaluations of the aims and scope of cultural discourses and products, especially constructions of literary, political, and social histories, which also feature prominently in contemporary thought. Furthermore, by creating a dialogue between narratives of the present day and the

⁵ A reverse coloniser is an ex-colony colonising its old coloniser(s). According to Edward Said, the weakness of the dominant empires manifested itself already at the beginning of the twentieth century when the cultures of the (ex-)colonies indirectly began to appear, for example, in English modernist literature and determine its characteristics (Said 1994: 186-190). Postcolonial literature later colonised English literature, leading to new terms, such as *Commonwealth Literature* or *Literature in English*. Luke Strongman (2002) and Patrick Parrinder (2006) identify various new subtypes of novels emerging this way, prognosticating their vibrant future. Strongman shows how these novels enrich fiction written in English and Parrinder claims, for example, that “the novel of immigration [is] now recognised as the most vital form of English fiction at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (Parrinder 2006: 380). Among the current global powers that could mean a possible threat to Britain’s status, the United States seems the most emphasised one in post-Victorian literary reflections, as I will describe in more detail in Chapter 2.

nineteenth century, strongly based on the concept of intertextuality, contemporary rewrites manage to supply different perspectives from the canonised Victorian ones.

But do we know what we mean by *Victorian*? Does the term refer to an age, a set of conventions, or an image of both based on a limited and biased selection of sources? And what should we call the rewrites of the era: historical novels, post-Victorian fiction or adaptations? And how to specify the differences between them? Why are there so many terms and so few definitions? The following survey constitutes an inquiry into these questions.

1.1 The Meanings of *Victorian*

In their introduction to *Rereading Victorian Fiction* (2000), Alice Jenkins and Juliet John identify *Victorian* as a difficult term, without making any further attempts at defining it. They only point out the fact that *Victorian* can be understood chronologically and non-chronologically, and they welcome the resulting diversity of readings as a constructive means to avoid interpretations that frame the Victorian period in various totalising myths (2000: 2). Such a broad understanding of the word seems to be a common attitude at present. It is easy to agree with the emphasis on the plurality of readings the term invites, while a closer scrutiny of its definitional nuances would nevertheless be useful, especially since ‘Victorian’, a chronically indefinable denomination, carries complexities that also unfold in the attempt to classify its postmodern refashionings.

Referring to Queen Victoria, as sovereign, *Victorian* (like Elizabethan) holds a denotative meaning that self-evidently marks that historical person’s period of reign; however, since it also specifies characteristics of an era, its chronological boundaries often get further extended. Various disciplines also employ the term at their convenience. In literary studies it has literary historical, literary theoretical, and/or aesthetic applications. Additionally, *Victorian* also triggers connotative readings. Respective utilisations of the term depend on the school of thought emphasising its different aspects as well as on the way eras following the Victorian one, such as modernism or postmodernism, review the nineteenth-century period in question. Hence feminist, postcolonial and other cultural revisions of the term *Victorian* prove crucial for a better understanding of how the postmodern takes issue with

the nineteenth century. Furthermore, all these considerations also influence the terminological choice for twentieth-century refashionings, including novelistic ones.

In current critical usage, the so-called *Victorian* referents of twentieth-century rewritings range from Jane Austen through Thomas Hardy to Virginia Woolf, so the periodisation including all the reworkings gets construed aesthetically rather than historically. This way the concept of the *Victorian* comprises Romantic and pre-WWI-fiction and ignores historical data like “the life of its monarch” or “the beginning and end of her century” (Green-Lewis 2000: 30). The explanation for perceptions of such extended chronologies lies in the temporally and otherwise limiting nature of the term (Kohlke 2008: 2)⁶ as well as the in-betweenness of the Victorian era dominated by the greater periods of Romanticism and Modernism (Amstrong 1993: 1). Still, this premise seems very dangerous to begin with, since, if taken seriously, a system of common aesthetic denominators would have to be determined for fiction written between the mid-eighteenth and the early-twentieth centuries, against which we would then compare the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century corpus of texts. To my knowledge, no such endeavour has taken place so far, which, considering the dubiousness of the task, is not surprising. Thus, in the following, the term ‘Victorian’, used in a temporal sense (and not italicised), denotes the specific historical period of Queen Victoria’s reign from 1837-1901, while *Victorian* (italicised) is reserved for specific references to the term itself.

The connotative meaning of *Victorian*, emerging in parallel with the denotative one immediately after the death of Queen Victoria, was first employed to separate Edwardian attitudes from Victorian ones, where “ ‘Victorian values’ took on an almost oedipal quality,” partly still retained today (Bullen 1997: 2). An anthropomorphic historiography of the term expands this by now established view claiming that by the 1950s the threatening fatherly nature of *Victorian* gives way to a more tender grand- or great-grandfatherly remoteness, and then becomes increasingly intimate, sisterly and brotherly from the

⁶Critics of nineteenth-century British literature engage in a similar terminological debate: they call the attention to the inappropriateness of the term *Victorian Studies* to denote research that disregards the queen’s period of reign and disproves of the colonising associations of the term *Victorian* (Llewellyn 2008: 166). *Victorian* is also employed with a chronological uncertainty in American Studies. Some critics advocate its usage for the last four decades of the queen’s reign to denote the invention of the tradition of British royalty, others apply it to denote the middle of the nineteenth century when the cultural transformations of the era started to gain grounds and extend their boundaries (Mills 1992: x).

eighties onwards (1-3).⁷ Note how the terminological categorisation is fuelled by a Darwinist need to establish familial correspondences. A more progressive critical history of the term argues that binaries not only exist between Victorianism and each historical era it is contrasted with, but that these oppositions also appear within every particular era that rereads the Victorian (Joyce 2002: 7).

The connotative meanings of *Victorian* receive further scrutiny in the context of the postmodern. In the sixties, two conflicting attitudes to Victorianism emerged through the discourse of sexuality: on the one hand, *Victorian* referred to everything that stood in the way of sexual freedom; on the other hand, due to the increasing temporal distance from the era, the deconstruction and reassessment of the coherence of the Victorians' supposed sexual repression began to take place (Kaplan 2007: 85-86). If the same duality is framed within the political context of the eighties, the Thatcherite (mis)interpretation of 'Victorian values' can be juxtaposed with the Kinnockian one: in order to promote the ideology of their own politics, the conservatives employed catchphrases like progress and prosperity, while labour opposed these by the likes of drudgery and squalor to describe the same concept (Joyce 2002: 3-4). Hence, while historicising the term *Victorian*, the construction of binary oppositions surfaces both in the discourses of sexuality and politics, the former pointing out the moment when the term started to acquire contradictory interpretations and the latter reflecting a stage when it was already deconstructed.

All the above connotations come into play in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*. The text is both a biography and autobiography of two characters, that of Archibald McCandless followed by the heroine Bella Baxter/Victoria McCandless' narrative, framed by the author's introduction and closing critical and historical notes. The competing narrative voices reveal different attitudes to the Victorian age. Giving an account of the couple's courtship and marriage, the establishment of a family and their careers, the happy ending of Archibald's nineteenth-century diary sounds very much like the closing chapter of *Jane Eyre*. This

⁷ Critics not only use such (quasi-)genealogical relationships to characterise the connection of historical eras, but also to depict correspondences between authors. For example, Ákos I. Farkas uses a similar vocabulary when analysing Anthony Burgess's divergences from his master, James Joyce: "some kind of post- or anti-modern revolt against the father in the name of the grandfather, it cannot remain unnoticed how often Burgess came to question the feasibility of the Joycean enterprise" (Farkas 2002: 134).

account is successively revised by Bella/Victoria who requires the reader to believe her story instead of Archibald's, describing her distaste for the previous narrative in detail:

As I said before, to my nostrils the book stinks of Victorianism. It is as sham-gothic as the Scott Monument, Glasgow University, St. Pancras Station and the Houses of Parliament. I hate such structures. Their useless over-ornamentation was paid for out of needlessly high profits: profits squeezed from the stunted lives of children, women and men working more than twelve hours a day, six days a week in NEEDLESSLY filthy factories; for by the nineteenth century we had the knowledge to make things cleanly. We did not use it. The huge profits of the owning classes were too sacred to be questioned. (Gray 2002: 275)

Fictitiously written in 1914, this highly dismissive reaction to the Victorian age betrays a typically modernist refusal in a distinctly oedipal tone. The concerns voiced about Victorian economic and social policies echo the Kinnockian view of the era as one of ignorance, poverty and social inequality, countering the Thatcherite interpretation depicting the period as an age of general progress, enrichment and prosperity. Bella/Victoria's assertive feminist narrative finally meets correction by the author's closing notes to the novel.⁸ The authorial commentary attempts to reinstate Archibald's version of the story by means of patriarchal revision, claiming that the heroine could only show her talent because her husband let her do so and that, in reality, she was quite mad (again, a reiteration of *Jane Eyre*'s madwoman topos). Similarly to Bella/Victoria's earlier attack on her husband, the author indirectly blames his character for being too Victorian, citing a purported earlier commentator from 1920, namely the socialist reformer and economist Beatrice Webb: "She is now quite sex-mad – an erotomaniac, to use the older term – and tries to hide it under prim language which shows she is still, at heart, a subject of Queen Victoria" (308). This remark sheds light on the controversial rhetoric and perception of Victorian sexuality as an issue of modernist as well as postmodernist criticism. The fact that she has two names – "Bella", used mainly in her private sphere, and "Victoria" employed in the public domain

⁸ The author not only frames his novel by his commentary, but also provides drawings to illustrate his text. Commenting on a recent exhibition of Gray's artwork in the Scottish National Gallery, the TLS praises his "talent for dramatic illustration, frequently witty, at times sinister," calling him a "walking World Heritage Site" (Campbell 2010). In the above context of a modernist reaction to the Victorian era, his multiple art of text and image production emphasises the idea of a modernist author.

of her life – further complicates the interpretation of this sentence, and of the heroine’s role in the novel on the whole, generating allusions to the much-discussed figure of Queen Victoria herself.⁹

More contemporary readings of *Victorian* in our own time are similarly ideological, to return to the previously raised notion of binary oppositions. If *Victorian* is read as “a dialectical condensation of [...] contrary tendencies” (Joyce 2002: 7), we always have to be conscious of our own investment in the interpretation process (15).¹⁰ In my view, the current investment mainly involves a drive to unearth – or invent – material not part of the official historiography of the nineteenth century, and utilise this material to reinterpret the Victorians: witness the ever-growing number of literary biographies, such as Peter Ackroyd’s *Dickens* or Colm Tóibín’s *The Master*, narratives of Charles Dickens and Henry James, respectively. Matthew Sweet’s *Inventing the Victorians* (2001) proves a successful critical venture in reinstating the Victorians, where, following a discussion of many sources that counter the cliché-like understanding of the Victorians as repressed, oppressed and dull, the author reminds us in good Foucauldian spirit that “Victorian culture was as rich and difficult and complex and pleasurable as our own” (Sweet 2001: xxiii). Hence, he suggests not only that we are more Victorian than the Victorians, but also that we *are* the Victorians. On the one hand, we increasingly begin to acknowledge that “they [the Victorians] moulded our culture, defined our sensibilities, built a world for us to live in” (231); on the other, we continue to deny our affinities with them, delimiting ourselves against the Victorians, thus acting as repressively and dully as we accuse them of having done. The title, *Inventing the Victorians* shows an awareness of the enormous creative input entailed in (re)interpreting an era and its conventions, which echoes the fictionalised George Meredith’s praise of Chatterton quoted in the motto of this chapter: “He *invented* an entire period and made its imagination his own [...] The poet does not merely *recreate* or describe the world. He actually *creates* it” (Ackroyd 1987: 157, my italics).

⁹ A relevant feminist analysis that puts Queen Victoria’s attempt to harmonise her private and public lives in parallel with similar difficulties faced by today’s feminist academics is Laurie Langbauer’s “Queen Victoria and Me” (Kucich and Sadoff 2000: 211-233).

¹⁰ As Steven Connor acutely phrases it: “No revision can entirely avoid reversion; no attempt to rework the myths of self-possessed beginning can entirely avoid becoming possessed by the desire for self-possession on which it lays hands” (1994: 97), which is a very valid observation concerning both the writers and the critics of contemporary fiction reworking Victorian tenets.

By presenting these current attempts at differentiation within *Victorian*, I intended to emphasise the plurality of our possible relationships with the Victorian era.¹¹ Accordingly, the term, acquiring different possible readings in the sixties, in the eighties/nineties, and at present, summons a diachronic understanding, simultaneously inviting a synchronic one of multiple interpretations. Therefore, these different approaches can be read together, rather than against one another. Consequently, attitudes to current reworkings seem to be determined by a synthesis of the denotative and connotative meanings of the term *Victorian*. This, at the moment, allows for quite a number of possible interpretations, which readily shows in the abundance of terms used for rewrites, discussed further below.

1.2 Appropriating *Victorian*: Terming Postmodern Rewrites

Is it *Victoriana*, *Victoriographies*, *retro-*, *neo-* or *post-Victorian novels* we encounter when we read rewritings of the Victorian era? Shall we adhere to the already well-rehearsed term *historiographic metafiction* or simply call them all *historical novels*? Could we categorise them as *adaptations*, *prequels* or *sequels* of Victorian texts, disguised as nineteenth-century novels, but in fact consider them postmodern variations of these novels? Are they instances of *pseudo-Victorian* or *pseudo-historical novels*? Why so many terms? Why so many different perspectives? In the following I review the terminology applied so far and deduce *post-Victorian fiction* as the most suitable term at present, especially because, similarly to *Victorian*, it displays nuances in both the historical and the aesthetic realms and does not yet seem to exhibit enough distinctive features that would allow its separation from the current postmodern context. I also point out the integrative nature of this term, which blends in with the interdisciplinarity of research in the field.

Two broad approaches to terming postmodern fictional reworkings of the Victorian era can be distinguished: one makes the literary critical terminology of the novel, such as *historical fiction* or *historiographic metafiction* its foundation, while the other takes the historically or culturally perceived term *Victorian* as a basis and attaches prefixes or suffixes to it, thus constructing *neo-*, *retro-*, *post-Victorian* or *Victoriana*, in order to recontextualise current

¹¹ As my dissertation mostly concentrates on the UK, I have not considered any comparative aspects of interpreting Victorianism. Surveying the convergences and divergences between British and American cultural, social and economic trends of the nineteenth century, the collection *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Its Legacy*, eds. Steve Ickringill and Stephen Mills, Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992 vol. 24, (London Conference 1990) would expand this research focus.

rewrites in different ideological discourses. Some attempts synthesise the two and create hybridised terms like *Victoriography* to define the group of texts in question.

Historical fiction, itself a term constantly redefined, proves the broadest possible category applied to current rewrites. In the spirit of Hayden White's *Metahistory*, Linda Hutcheon coined the term *historiographic metafiction* to depict a postmodern subgenre of the novel that interacts with history and, at the same time, questions the possibility of such a venture.¹² As part of a general ideological discussion about whether we presently experience the end of history or a new beginning of it,¹³ these two subcategories of fiction, *historiographic metafiction* and *historical fiction* engage in a dialogue. On the one hand, they compete, since the annexation of either by the other can be reasoned for (*historiographic metafiction* being just a postmodern subcategory of *historical fiction*, or *historiographic metafiction* debunking *historical fiction* as its identical category); on the other hand, their ongoing mutual modification may end in their merging or perhaps giving birth to a third category integrating both of them.¹⁴

Whichever way we interpret the terms, the present stage of the dialogue yields denominations like *pseudo-historical fiction* or *contemporary historical fiction* (Bormann 2002: 75), both employed to describe postmodern rewrites of the Victorian era as well but, as Brian W. Shaffer also argues, it is always contemporary history with which the novel engages (2006: 32). The term *pseudo-Victorian fiction* (Gutleben 2001: 50, 56; Letissier 2004: 111) refines the classification further by also indicating the revisions' convergence with, and divergence from, their source. However, since history has by now been deconstructed as, at least partly, narrative in essence, depriving the term *pseudo-historical*

¹² The coinage of *historiographic metafiction* was preceded by the introduction of *metafiction* denoting a self-reflexive mode of constructing postmodern novelistic texts. The term *metafiction* was coined by William Gass in the late 1960s and defined by Robert Scholes and Patricia Waugh in the 1970s and 80s, respectively. In Hungarian research it was Ferenc Takács who first employed the term *metaregény* [*metanovel*] characterising a subtype of such texts, the novel being about novelists writing a novel, as early as 1973 (631).

¹³ See Hayden White's *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) or Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History or the Last Man* (1992) versus a prevalent historical consciousness and an interest in establishing various new historical approaches in current theoretical movements like New Historicism, Neo-Marxism and Cultural Studies.

¹⁴ Brian McHale participated in this dialogue in the 1990s, which can best be traced in how he amended his analysis on historical fiction of his 1987 *Postmodernist Fiction* by adapting some new generic insights in his 1992 *Constructing Postmodernism*. One of these changes seems to be the employment of Hutcheon's term from 1988, *historiographic metafiction* instead of the earlier *postmodern (revisionist) historical fiction* to denote contemporary examples of historical novels with metafictional input.

of any heuristic power, the same prognosis could be given to the term *pseudo-Victorian*, especially since it is precisely its postmodern rewrites that take an active part in the deconstruction of the Victorian novel, naturally affecting the term *Victorian* itself.

Thus numerous critics propose that, since rewrites of Victorian texts fit the definition, that is to say, they engage with history in a paradoxical way, they should be grouped as *historiographic metafiction*.¹⁵ The use of this terminology is justified since it leaves room for many different types of rewrites, encouraging a comparison of the postmodern understanding of Victorian texts and of rewrites of renaissance, romantic or modernist ones. Nevertheless, if only for heuristic purposes, a more specific terminology for reworkings of Victorian texts, rather than texts of any/all earlier periods per se, could be revealing in its descriptive power. Accordingly, the alternative term *Victoriography* presents itself as an option. Julian Wolfreys's book on contemporary rewrites bears this title, and he employs the same term for one of his university courses, defining *Victoriographies* as "cultural writing formed out of interpretations and translations of the high ground of nineteenth-century culture" (Wolfreys, 2001).¹⁶ Both his book and the survey course apparently relate mainly to fiction; hence this definition, inclusive of all kinds of rewritings of the Victorian era, literary and otherwise, not to mention the wider interpretation of text as product, sounds somewhat broad. However, *Victoriography* proves a useful term for locating reworkings of Victorian texts as part of the already established postmodern discourse of historiographical metafiction, and it helpfully also includes the sound pattern of the word *historiography*.

In his *Science in the Neo-Victorian Novel: A Poetics (And Two Case-Studies)* (2002), Daniel Bormann consciously combines the two approaches to defining postmodern fictional rewrites of Victorian texts, those of novelistic discourse and cultural-historical criticism. Discussing the aspect of literary terminology, he first adopts Ansgar Nünning's

¹⁵ Personal communication with Susana Onega at the HUSSE conference 2007. Onega, whose clarification of Hutcheon's definition is widely used, claimed that she had also convinced Christian Gutleben, another prominent researcher in this field, of the application of this term.

¹⁶ Though the term *Victoriography* sounds interesting and would be worth further exploration, unfortunately, this publication in which it is employed has been out of print and unavailable in most libraries for the last few years.

definition of historical fiction,¹⁷ which applies to novels based on the tension between past and present, dealing with subject matters that belong to history, historiography and the philosophy of history on all narrative levels and discourses (Bormann 2002: 55). Following Nünning's typology, Bormann then selects some subtypes of historical novels to limit his analysis to the discussion of *contemporary historical fiction*, a term referring to the broader category of novels in question, distinct from traditional or classic historical fiction (56-59). As a second step, he gives a brief account of existing definitions based on the term *Victorian*, specifying different cultural-historical understandings of current rewrites of Victorian fiction. He finally arrives at his own choice, the term *neo-Victorian novel*, which he then defines by applying the adopted definition of the historical novel to postmodern reworkings of Victorian texts (61-62). This connection of the two approaches, specifying the second as part of the broader context of the first, proves an important move. Although Bormann's terminological historiography is not developed in-depth in this work, he identifies the lack of a consensual and well-argued definition as a serious research gap in the field (18). Before exploring his preferred definition further, a short detour of other applications of the terms *retro-* and *neo-Victorian novel* seems appropriate.

In her article "Natural History: The Retro-Victorian Novel" (1998), Sally Shuttleworth coins the titular term *retro-Victorian novel*, which she uses interchangeably with the expression *Victorian-centred novel*. She identifies *retro-Victorian fiction* as a type of historical novel, and explains that the category of historical novel is broadly understood and thus inclusive of historiographic metafiction (254). The author delimits her analysis to a specific subset of *retro-Victorian novels* – explicitly nostalgic texts that engage with the discourse of natural history – but does not provide any further definition (253). Similarly, Dana Shiller's seminal paper "The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel" (1997) introduces the term *neo-Victorian novel* "as at once characteristic of postmodernism and imbued with a historicity reminiscent of the nineteenth-century novel" (538), though once

¹⁷ Ansgar Nünning, author of *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiction. Teil I: Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans* [From Historical Fiction to Historiographic Metafiction. Part I: The Theory, Typology and Poetics of the Historical Novel]. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995 and *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiction. Teil II: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungstendenzen des historischen Romans in England seit 1950*. [From Historical Fiction to Historiographic Metafiction. Part II: Realisations and Tendencies of Development of the Historical Novel in England since 1950]. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995 has done valuable research in the fields of genre theory and the historical novel.

again a more complex definition fails to emerge.¹⁸ Both critics attempt to disprove Fredric Jameson's critique of our current "historical deafness" (Jameson 1996: xi) by demonstrating that retro- or neo-Victorian novels reveal an in-depth engagement with history (Shuttleworth 1998: 266) and considerably enrich the postmodern present (Shiller 1997: 558). While such an apology for the artistic merit of contemporary rewrites has validity, the argument for the current value of history and historicity may remain trapped within the Jamesonian framework of recuperative practices towards the past (Jameson 1996: x-xi), unless a greater emphasis is accorded to these novels' specific relationship to the postmodern context.

In his *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (2001), Christian Gutleben identifies a similar fracture between nostalgically inclined and innovative strategies of novelistic texts approaching history, which seems to raise terminological problems as well. Initially, he adopts Shuttleworth's term *retro-Victorian fiction*, which he uses interchangeably with *neo-Victorian*, interpreting it as "a new literary movement whose very essence consisted in re-thinking and rewriting Victorian myth and stories" (Gutleben 2001: 5). Surveying this body of novels, the author later revisits the terminology and pinpoints a paradoxical state where "the most famous neo-Victorian novels are the least typical" (164). This means that apart from some well-known examples which comply with postmodernist conventions, like John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, numerous novels in the group, like Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie*, resist them and "seem to partake of Habermas's category of *neo-Conservative fiction*" (164). Although the discrepancy between the heterogeneity of texts and their categorisation as *retro-Victorian novels* receives some attention, in the end the original terminology is retained.

¹⁸ Instead of providing a specific definition of *neo-Victorian*, Shiller distinguishes three categories within this subgenre: the first revises individual Victorian texts, the second creates new adventures for known Victorian characters (fictional and historical figures are not differentiated, however) and the third imitates Victorian literary conventions (1997: 558). This third category is termed "*new*" *Victorian fictions*, which is also used by Hilary M. Schor when analysing the postmodern revisions of formal aspects of the Victorian novel (2000: 235). *Neo-Sensation Novel* is considered as another a subtype of neo-Victorian fiction practiced by those who "have returned to a nineteenth-century form to express their scepticism concerning the effect of this particular system of belief [the postmodern] on our understanding of concepts like morality, ethics, responsibility and culpability." (Marsh 1995: 119). Though it is claimed that this type of fiction is complementary to theories of postmodernism (120), the argument seems nostalgically inclined, judged by its critics as reconstructive contrasting postmodern valuelessness with nineteenth-century values (Kucich and Sadoff 2000: xxix).

Repairing this shortage of elaborate descriptions of *retro-* and *neo-Victorian fiction*, Bormann takes Nünning's typology of historical fiction detailed above, applies it to the term *neo-Victorian novel*, and constructs the following definition:

[a] neo-Victorian novel is a fictional text which creates meaning from the background of awareness of time as flowing and as poised uneasily between *the Victorian* past and the present; which secondly deals dominantly with topics which belong to the field of history, historiography and/or the philosophy of history *in dialogue with a Victorian past*; and which thirdly can do so at all narrative levels and in any possible discursive form, be it through the narration of action, through static description, argumentative exposition or stream-of-consciousness techniques. (Bormann 2002: 62)

This definition contextualises postmodern rewrites as a specific group within historical fiction, establishing a relationship between history and fiction with a particular relevance to the Victorian age, yet it opens up the possibility of further delimitation. How exactly should “meaning” be understood that emerges from the intermingling of the Victorian past and the present? And which (sub)genres, narrative types and stratifications get reactivated by neo-Victorian fiction and why? In addition, the way the author makes his terminological choice implies certain dissatisfaction with the existing possibilities: “If I will adopt Shiller’s *neo-Victorian novel*, it is only because it resembles other approaches to contemporary literary phenomena [...] and because, indeed, this kind of contemporary Victorian novel is a new – *neo* – phenomenon” (61). Thinking along these lines, the newness of a movement that has been in vogue for almost fifty years deserves further periodisation, however useful it proves to call it (still) new. This process necessarily involves a closer scrutiny of the nature of these texts’ relationship with different aspects of postmodernism substantiating the implied expectation of freshness and novelty. Similarly, a detailed analysis of the parallels between neo-Victorian and other movements with the same prefix, like the neo-Renaissance or the neo-Gothic, could expand Bormann’s reasoning. One useful step in this respect has been a footnote remark in the introduction to the collection *Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture* (2008), where the political implications of the prefix neo- are separated from its generic ones. Hence when added to words like fascism or Victorianism in the sense of a political

movement, it “implies a desire to return to the political beliefs of that movement’s past”, while “used in conjunction with a genre, the implication is rather a new, modified, or more modern style” as in neo-Gothic or neo-Victorian (Johnston and Waters 2008: 10-11 fn5).

The *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* has also adopted the term *neo-Victorian*, and applies it in its widest possible sense, so as to include the whole nineteenth century, its cultural discourses and products, and their abiding legacies, not just within British and British colonial contexts and not necessarily coinciding with Queen Victoria’s realm; that is, to interpret neo-Victorianism outside of the limiting nationalistic and temporal identifications that ‘Victorian’, in itself or in conjunction with ‘neo-’, conjures up for some critics (Kohlke 2008: 2). More explicitly than Bormann’s, this explanation juxtaposes the Victorian with the contemporary, so much so, that another essay in the same volume of NVS regards the *neo-Victorian* as “new approaches to the Victorian period rather than an attempt to indulge in escapism masked as historical narrative” (Llewellyn 2008: 169). The inviting terminological flexibility countering the dread of repeating old narratives as a detour from current uneasiness presents itself in both definitions; yet, this way the boundaries of the research field seem to become unclear. Especially from the second remark, the *neo-Victorian* emerges as an addendum to the *Victorian*, which implies a scholarship primarily focussing on the nineteenth century and not the postmodern present.

The term *post-Victorian* seems to supply an answer to two of the previously outlined difficulties. Firstly, in contrast to *neo-Victorian*, it encompasses a more explicit reference to the postmodern context; secondly, similarly to the terms postcolonial or postfeminist, it expresses an intention of revision rather than that of a repetition of earlier narratives. Viewing contemporary rewrites from a late-postmodernist angle, John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff define *post-Victorian* as “a term that conveys paradoxes of historical continuity and disruption” (2000: xiii). Georges Letissier also adopts the term *post-Victorian*, explaining his choice by suggesting that contrary to *retro-*, *neo-* or *pseudo-Victorian*, *post-Victorian* “conflates *post-modernism* and *Victorianism*, highlighting the paradoxes of historical continuity and disruption that underpin the *post-Victorian* cultural movements” (2004: 111). Letissier implicitly suggests an important argument in favour of opting for *post-Victorian* amongst competing possible terms, namely, that it connotatively blends the Victorian, the modernist and the postmodernist eras. This current integrativity of

postmodernism demonstrates a substantial move away from the exclusive nature it exhibited in the seventies: “postmodernism became more and more an inclusive term that gathered to itself all literary and cultural phenomena that could not be classified as either Realist or Modernist” (Bertens 1986: 25).

Interpreting the prefix *post-* of *postmodern*, Brian McHale points out the complexity of the relationship between the two eras encompassed by the term: it includes a temporal posteriority, with postmodernism coming *after* modernism, and it also implies a logical or historical consequentiality, meaning that the postmodern follows *from* modernism (1999: 5). By analogy, the prefix *post-* in the term *post-Victorian* may be read in at least two senses: first, as a modifier of *Victorian* underlining the presence of the Victorian tradition in everything that comes after,¹⁹ and second, as the first part of the compound *postmodern* signalling that contemporary practices are perceived to stem more from the Victorian than the modernist era. In fact, the argument Fredric Jameson advances in his rejection of the term *postmodernism*, namely that surveys under that heading do not yield substantial results concerning the postmodern but inform us of modernism instead (1996: 66), can be fruitfully adapted to the analysis of *post-Victorian*. Since *Victorian* itself still lacks a comprehensive referent, the utilisation of *post-Victorian* to approach contemporary (re)interpretations of Victorian material may similarly yield substantial knowledge of the *Victorian*. Consequently, if the meaning of *post-* is contextualised in the postmodern debate, used both to depict whatever comes after modernism or structuralism and to signify a subversion of these trends, its reading can be harmonised with that of *Victorian*: both terms have a temporal as well as an aesthetic perspective.

Given the choice of prefixes attached to *Victorian* analysed above, I would summarise their suitability as follows. *Neo-* and *retro-Victorian fiction* both foreground the notion *Victorian*, differing temporally in perspective. Their interchangeability seems a general consensual but unreflected critical practice. Bormann proposes that these two prefixes denote the same group of texts only differing in focus: *retro-* emphasises the past and *neo-*

¹⁹ This is the only sense in which some critics employ the term as well: “our post-Victorian present” (Llewellyn 2008: 165) marking current times; “radical post-Victorian phenomenon” (Mills 1992: xxi) and “post-Victorian cultural turn” (Kohlke 2008: 3), referring to modernist reactions right after the Victorian age. On some occasions, the terms *late Victorian*, *neo-Victorian* and *post-Victorian* are even used synonymously to denote the era that follows the 1880s (Parish 1992: 2).

the future (2002: 61). Hence the main terminological accent is not exclusively on the nineteenth-century era, yet the relationship of the texts to the current postmodern context implicit in these prefixes needs more elaboration. The term *post-Victorian* comprises both historical settings without immediately taking a stance on the hierarchy of the eras. Those who use *post-Victorian* stress the existing debate between the nostalgic and innovative aspects of *Victorian* (Kucich and Sadoff 2000) and raise awareness of its historicity (Letissier 2004). Additionally, rather than having either the Victorian or the postmodern as the focus of their analysis, they usually examine the two together.

As it emerges from the above discussion, the reason for the abundance of terms and the difficulty to choose among them for categorising the group of novels in question possibly lies in the heterogeneity of texts adapting previous historical eras. Most works analysed in my dissertation can be characterised as pastiches, that is, reprises of Victorian fiction-writing, which display a relationship to the present and often use metafictional techniques as well. However, numerous novels engage with the Victorian age without having such connections to the postmodern. These belong to the traditional genres of the historical novel or romance.²⁰ Categorisation may be further complicated by having to account for texts that, similarly to post-Victorian fiction, use postmodern novelistic techniques as well as employing an explicit connection to the present by corresponding timelines, yet the era they rewrite is not the Victorian one. A representative example of this would be the novel *Hawksmoor* (1985) by Peter Ackroyd, which is set in the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries. This contextual information reveals important aspects to consider when choosing the term that best describes the addressed corpus of rewritings. First, novelistic revisions of the Victorian age and its conventions should be distinguished from texts refashioning other eras, which makes the term *Victorian* a crucial part of the name. Second, fiction tackling the Victorian age by following nineteenth-century conventions has to be separated from texts that establish a dialogue with those conventions from a postmodern perspective, which serves as another argument for employing the prefix *post-* in naming the category emphasising its relatedness to the postmodern.

²⁰ The popularity of producing such conventional texts shows by the vast list of works collected on a specific website devoted to historical romance writing. Here one can not only search by author or title, but also by historical era (<http://historicalromancewriters.com/timeperiods.cfm?genreID=24>).

The suffix -a has also become an increasingly popular ending attached to the term *Victorian*, hence the word *Victoriana* to name postmodern rewritings of Victorian texts. Originally, the term was restricted to an exclusively material definition, denoting objects from the Victorian era. If employed in this sense, it lacks an explanation given its etymology (see, for example, Kucich and Sadoff 2000: xxii). Cora Kaplan, whose recent book bears *Victoriana* as its title, applies the word differently. She provides its historiographical context in her introduction revealing a gradual expansion of the semantic field of the term. Although in the 1960s *Victoriana* may still have referred to material remains of the nineteenth century, by the end of the seventies it was extended to a “miscellany of evocations and recyclings” of the age, to finally broaden its meaning to practically all “representations and reproductions for which the Victorian [...] is the common referent,” (2007: 3). This periodisation sounds convincing and explains Kaplan’s choice of the same term for postmodern rewritings of the age, although she does not offer examples to illustrate this observation. Examples would be especially welcome because those who use the term in its original sense feel the need to add a qualifier to make it fit contemporary (con)texts, hence the term *Postmodern Victoriana*, which depicts products of a postmodern Victorian mode (such as literary, screen or stage adaptations of Victorian novels or artistic objects inspired by the era), considering the postmodern as the Victorian’s historical “other” (Kucich and Sadoff 2000: x, xi).²¹

Modified or on its own, the term *Victoriana*, just like *Victoriographies*, invites a broader frame of reference than just the fictional, since it relates to various representations, not only novels. Terms like *historical novel* or *historiographic metafiction* prove necessary in a generic sense, but they do not specify the age that is being refashioned. The terms *neo-* and *retro-Victorian fiction* designate the era but lack an emphasis of the postmodernist influence in these texts. Therefore, at the moment, the term *post-Victorian novel* lends itself as the most suitable to denote contemporary reworkings of Victorian texts, especially

²¹ The same duplicity of terms applies when referring to critics of contemporary rewrites of the nineteenth century: the term *Victorianist* is applied by those who tend to use *Victoriana* to depict this group of postmodern fiction (Kaplan 2007: 4, Krueger 2002: xiii) and its modified versions, such as *progressive Victorianist*, *contemporary Victorianist*, or the even more specific *nostalgic new Victorianist* are used by those who are unsure about the meaning of *Victorian* or feel the need to qualify the term to point out up-to-date relevancies. (Joyce 2002: 4, 15, 12, respectively)

in that the interdisciplinary nature of research into the post-Victorian phenomenon, examined below, appears to ask for its integrative qualities.

1.3 Contexts and Critical Discourses of Post-Victorian Fiction

Being a new research field, the framework of post-Victorian studies is still in the making. This section aims to review the disciplines and discourses that reflect on the post-Victorian phenomenon, in particular, the post-Victorian novel. Contexts of literary-, film-, adaptation- and cultural studies are examined to survey the following questions: How does post-Victorian fiction and its multidisciplinary reading affect the genre of the novel? What influences does this have on the canon and canonisation? In what way do these changes tie in with postmodernism? Why is post-Victorian fiction so popular, and what possible functions does it fulfil? Answers are provided with the help of identifying and juxtaposing concepts prevalent both in the nineteenth century and at present, such as sequelisation, serialisation, rewriting, consumption, referentiality and ethics, whereby some fruitful theoretical and ideological engagements emerge in the discursive sites listed above.

Literary criticism constitutes the most obvious context to look for discussions of the post-Victorian phenomenon. Some studies, such as Gutleben's *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (2001) are exclusively devoted to examining how the post-Victorian phenomenon interacts with fiction, while others focussing more generally on literary history or the novel increasingly dedicate space to the analysis of rewritings, usually by way of a separate chapter towards the end of the collection.²² Hence it seems that we can hardly address Victorian texts without reflecting on their rewritings too, and likewise the discussion of the novel as a genre proves difficult without considering the influence that literary adaptation has on it. The perception of Victoriana as an inventor and coloniser of genres (Kaplan 2007: 4) or the view that the "[t]he Retro-Victorian novel is not a new genre, it is the novel of all genres, the composite novel of its epoch, which highlights the cannibalising, ever-broader, all-encompassing and

²² See Anne Humpherys's "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel: Novels about Novels" (Brantlinger and Thesing 2005: 442-457), Kate Flint's "Plotting the Victorians: Narrative, Post-Modernism, and Contemporary Fiction" (Bullen 1997: 286-305), Robin Gilmour's "Using the Victorians: the Victorian Age in Contemporary Fiction" (Jenkins and John 2000: 189-200).

all-assimilating nature of the novel” (Gutleben 2001: 223) illustrates how critics perceive the effect post-Victorian fiction has on literary conventions. This being the case, one may ask what is happening to the genre of the novel. Is it becoming the dominant genre usurping all others? Is it being developed into many different genres? Or is it being reshaped in other, as yet undefined ways? As the above observations show, the concept of rewriting definitely influences our perception of the novel. Anne Humpherys claims, for example, that novelistic texts are always in discussion with other texts, repeating old stories and existing conventions, so that the novel inherently reveals itself as a genre of rewriting and thus a postmodern project (2005: 444-5). In this framework, post-Victorian texts engaging with their nineteenth-century predecessors indicate both generic and thematic repetitions in fiction, best visible in novels with a double plot, such as A. S. Byatt’s *Possession* or Graham Swift’s *Ever After*.

Literary interpretations are increasingly joined by discussions of fiction on film (or stage) extending the research focus of studying post-Victorian novels. Kaplan’s *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (2007) and the collection *Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture* (2008) both include a chapter surveying screen and stage adaptations among the literary analyses that constitute the bulk of the books²³ and in *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary British Literature and Film* (2004) edited by Susana Onega and Christian Gutleben most critics intermingle reading tools of literary and film studies in their papers. The collection *Janespotting and Beyond: British Heritage Retrovisions Since The Mid-1990s* (2004) edited by Eckart Voigts-Virchow expands this horizon by concentrating not only on heritage film but a wider framework of mediating screen versions of nineteenth-century texts from television series to teaching practices. Perhaps the Oxford Journal *Adaptation*, established in 2008 and edited by Timothy Corrigan, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, makes the clearest statement in terms of interdisciplinarity: it expresses interest in book to screen adaptation as well as screen to book adaptation, aiming “to theorise and interrogate the phenomenon of literature on screen from both a literary and film studies perspective” (Corrigan, Cartmell, Whelehan “About the Journal” 2008). The title of the journal presents itself as a denominator of an

²³ “Retuning the Piano” (Kaplan 2007: 119-153), William Christie “‘Trifling Deviation’”: Stage and Screen Versions of Mary Shelley’s *Monster*” (Gay, Johnston and Waters 2008: 158-170).

increasingly important field of inquiry: adaptation studies.²⁴ Key theorists started to frame its discourse like Linda Hutcheon, who in her seminal work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) separates the process and the product labelled by the same term and examines various forms and contexts of the production and reception of adaptations.

Adaptation studies provides a good example of the emerging interdisciplinarity of research invited by the post-Victorian phenomenon, where the templates for cinematic readings of canonical novels developed by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan are widely applied in film studies but also imported back into discussions of literary adaptation (Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999). Julie Sanders does this in her comparative analysis of two literary processes of rewriting: adaptation and appropriation. She establishes that in the case of the former, a source text is always identifiable, whereas in that of the latter it may either not be obvious or not exist at all (2006: 26). Thus, appropriation proves more independent and more critical than adaptation (4). For example, in the adaptive chain of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000), we can find a curious mixture of nostalgic homage to the nineteenth-century narrative and critical revisions thereof. In the context of this ongoing adaptation fever – with multiple post-Victorian perspectives available on the story of *Jane Eyre*, for example – might it eventually become impossible for readers ignorant of the texts' first publication dates to establish whether Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* or D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* was written first? And, in the future, might non-academic readers even lose track of the *original* text? If this turns out to be the case, following Sanders's definitions, all adaptations may be in danger (or luck?) of becoming appropriations. After long years of the fidelity debate, this opposition has apparently been collapsed in film studies, as Whelehan's remark shows: "We are adapting adaptations not source texts any more" (Whelehan, 2008). In literary research, this problem goes back to the different value judgements attached to creation and invention. Robert Macfarlane examines the oscillation of the importance of these two faculties from one era to the other with a specific focus on the second half of the nineteenth century in his *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (2007). He claims that the transition from the primacy of creation or originality characteristic of Romanticism to the prevalence of invention and plagiarism fashionable in the twentieth century was well under way from as early as the 1860s, explicitly reversing

²⁴ Film, stage and other artistic adaptations of Victorian material would also provide fruitful sites of inquiry into the post-Victorian phenomenon, expanding the research focus I maintain in this dissertation.

the hierarchy of first and second-hand texts by the last decades of the nineteenth century leading to the superiority of rewriting from the beginning of the twentieth century (210-211). On the basis of these critiques one would expect the controversies related to originality, fidelity and plagiarism to be largely resolved; however, this does not seem to be the case. Recent collections of essays in media studies still engage with the problems of “an adaptationist or ‘fidelity’-approach” (Voigts-Virchow 2004: 25),²⁵ literary criticism expresses occasional concerns related to plagiarism, as explored in Chapter 3 in connection with D. M. Thomas’s work, not to mention the anxiety of authorship voiced by the authors themselves, as the case of Jean Rhys proves, also described in the third chapter; and fictional works accord similarly substantial interest to the originality of literary texts as it emerges from numerous contemporary adaptations, especially *Charlotte* and Jasper Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair* analysed in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

Perceived as “the motor force behind literary evolution” (Lefevere 1992: 2), rewriting has increasingly been devoted more scholarly attention, resulting in attempts at finding the suitable terminology to denote the body of texts in question. *Fluidity* is one of these terms, mostly used to mark the disruptive postmodern text in contrast to the fixity of homogeneous forms (Waugh 1995: 157). As John Bryant defines it, “a fluid text is any literary work that exists in more than one version. It is ‘fluid’ because the versions flow from one to another” (2002: 1). Hence fluidity is understood in a wide sense, including different stages of the rewriting process from creation through publication to adaptation, in other words, steps of authorial, editorial and cultural revisions (101). Working with the theoretical background of intertextuality Patsy Stoneman adopts Christopher Richard’s term *incremental literature* which denotes all pieces based on previously existing texts without specifying the nature of this relationship (1996: 239). She remains true to her flexible use of terminology in her later works as well, by employing the term *literary continuum* to describe predecessors’ influences on adapted literary works (Knight and Stoneman 2004: 2). These choices prove vital to establishing a connection between literary texts avoiding value judgements which, as Hutcheon also points out, affect adaptations as well since they are often rated as “secondary and inferior” (2006: xii, 31). Nevertheless, in

²⁵ See, in particular, Andrew Higson’s paper “English Heritage, English Literature, English Cinema: Selling Jane Austen to Movie Audiences in the 1990s” (Voigts-Virchow 2004: 35-50) explicitly attacking the overestimation of fidelity aspects in adaptation criticism.

order to get a clearer picture of the nature of rewriting and sequelisation, I think it is important to scrutinise them in more detail, especially concerning the above-mentioned anxiety related to the temporality and authenticity of adaptations or appropriations which summon further terms like *prequel*, *sequel* or *aftering*.²⁶

Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg contextualise the *sequel* as a site of intriguing connections among author, narrative and audience (1998: 17). They contend that the sequel consists of repetition-with-variation, whereby authors respond to readerly desire concerning an earlier text, which “is particularly acute at certain historical junctures, or, to put it another way, that the sequel is possible only under certain (repeating) cultural conditions” (17). Although the authors survey the eighteenth century, I think that this remark proves equally useful in establishing a connection between nineteenth-century texts and their contemporary rewritings. The literary scene appears an appropriate umbrella term to characterise the field of “historical junctures” between the two eras. On the one hand, today’s literary scene displays an enormous development in publication technologies and forums comparable to the fast evolvement of print culture in the nineteenth century (Kucich and Sadoff 2000: xxii), on the other hand, it focalises authorship, author-reader interaction and ensuing marketing strategies similarly to Victorian times.²⁷ Hence it stands to reason that all these overlaps result in the increasing popularity of the sequel. This in turn makes sequelisation an ethical issue, as it can easily become a corruptible device to satisfy market demands, not to mention the ensuing terminological confusion yielding terms like *midquel* or *parallelquel* symptomatic of the still maintained originality debate introduced above. The sequel on the market, the chase of the original and the pinning down of its rewritings by applying terms that particularise their relationship is illustrated in detail in the discussion of *The Eyre Affair* in the final chapter.

The abundance of terms not only shows that contemporary rewritings require classification and characterisation, but possibly also indicates changes in our reading habits. Experiments are conducted at various levels of readership of Victorian and post-Victorian fiction, from

²⁶ Unlike the terms discussed in the previous subchapter, such as *neo-* or *post-Victorian* that encompass cultural matter beyond fiction, *appropriation*, *adaptation*, *prequels*, *sequels* and *afterings* feature in this subchapter because they are used as exclusively referential to dramatic, filmic or fictional adaptations of Victorian material.

²⁷ A detailed discussion of the literary scene and its listed foci follows in the next chapter.

leisurely reading clubs to professional university classes, to reintroduce the reading of long novels in serial format as was common in the nineteenth century. This enterprise betrays complex cultural considerations. David Barndollar and Susan Schorn, for example, propose that with the reintroduction of serialised reading, audiences would refocus their attention to text and context, re-establishing a relationship between reading, literature, and aspects of life more generally. They report on their experiments of subjecting groups of people to reading Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and *A Tale of Two Cities* in monthly and weekly instalments, respectively, and explain the relevance and possible success of reading in serial format by relating it to methods of consumption audiences employ for digesting today's media soaps (2002: 168-9). Iris Kleinecke provides an actual example of this analogy by comparing serialised readings and showings of Dickens's texts with the television series *Eastenders* concluding that the same method of perception is employed on the part of the reader or viewer, and interestingly the two products also correspond topically (Kleinecke, 2007). The creation of suspense through the instalment-structure and the thus accentuated subgenres of sensation and detective fiction also connect these two serial modes of cultural production (Sanders 2006: 122). The immensely popular television series *House M. D.* with its protagonist solving a mysterious case in each episode serves as an example of this connection, the production being inspired by the similarly serialised investigations of Sherlock Holmes, not to mention that the BBC re-broadcasting of the Sherlock Holmes-series itself has begun anew in 2010.²⁸ A certain cultural anxiety manifests itself behind all these comparisons, raising questions about the abilities and willingness of the public to read. Hence, the potential advertisement and publication of classics and their rewritings in a serialised format may also function as another attempt to save the Gutenberg galaxy.

In the opening remarks of his book, *Dickens in Cyberspace*, cultural critic Jay Clayton argues that the Victorian author qualifies as one of the best candidates for survival in the present technological age, underlining how Dickens promoted innovations of his time, for example, by playing a major role in inventing the serialisation of fiction (2003: 3-4). A contemporary rewriting of a Dickens novel, Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006) features a

²⁸ The first three episodes of the series were shown in 2010 and the second series of another three episodes is scheduled for broadcasting in 2011. The major figures and topoi of the original story have been kept but it is set in the twenty-first century.

fictional example of serialised reading, where a simplified version of Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) serves as a successful teaching tool. Children's instruction consists of joint reading and discussion of the novel's instalments intermingled with parents' speeches on their most important wisdoms of life. Interpreted as the reiteration of Dickens's own legendary readings (Gribble 2008: 188), the necessity of such a serial mode of conveying a literary product in a completely different cultural context is amply illustrated in the comprehension problems native readers experience. Their lack of matching referents for some phenomena addressed in the novel, such as "a rimy morning" and "metropolis" or words like "insensibly" in the sentence "As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me" (Jones 2006: 195) hinders their understanding and in some cases leads to their discarding of the novel as "fancy nancy English talk" (195). Yet, the text remains popular enough for warriors to search for a real Mister Pip their imagination has created from the fictional character, in the process of which the only copy of the novel gets burnt. Thereafter the teacher and his pupils have to recreate *Great Expectations* from their memories, which they do with the help of their detailed knowledge of the serial instalments. Atrocities continue until Mr Watt identifies himself as Mr Pip to stop the killings. He promises to tell his story to his capturers in seven instalments mixing *Great Expectations* and his own biography –later referred to as "[Mr Watt's] Pacific version of *Great Expectations*" (149)–, which he cannot finish because he gets killed as well. The narrator, who is one of Mr Watt's pupils, escapes the scene and eventually becomes a university lecturer in Australia. Repeating Mr Watt's teaching method, she reads out *Great Expectations* to her students who are just as spellbound by the instalments as she was earlier.

The sequelisation of fiction seems to be another paradoxical postmodern venture: the ongoing reinterpretation of canonised literary characters, texts and conventions in new novel series results in a never-ending novelistic production that points towards the revival of the novel sequence. Thus are nineteenth-century literary conventions reinforced at the same time as they get deconstructed. This duplicity of interpretation also informs opinions on post-Victorian fiction's impact on the literary canon. It conserves the canon by making people reread Victorian novels, while simultaneously (re)discovering, revaluing and transforming it (Letissier 2004: 112). As Gutleben describes, post-Victorian novels affect the canon in an oxymoronic way, namely, by the nostalgic subversion/reinforcement of the

Victorian era and its texts (2001: 192). Some even regard rewriting as the main responsible activity enhancing the actual survival of the canon, especially among non-professional readers, and therefore advocate the devotion of greater research space to it (Lefevere 1992: 7).²⁹ One way to do this would be to follow the suggestion Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund make in the conclusion of their book *The Victorian Serial* (1991), namely to experience historical reading and meaning-making strategies by reintroducing nineteenth-century serialised reading, thereby not only “situating the literary canon in its cultural context”, but also interrogating literary pieces in new ways (276). In turn, new narratives or new sequences would be summoned like the teacher’s account in *Mister Pip*, or the narrator’s who abandons her doctoral dissertation on Dickens and creates her own autobiography instead. In fact, the reintegration of the nineteenth-century cultural values Hughes and Lund attribute to the serial as “a central literary form of the era” representing episodes of the human life-span from birth to death (1) is double-faced as it triggers new readings at the same time as reinforcing old narratives of human evolution.

Besides literary and film studies, as well as the interdisciplinary adaptation studies, cultural studies involving multiple disciplines is finally examined as yet another fruitful platform for discussions of the post-Victorian event. In fact, Jay Clayton regards this “[f]orging alliances among disciplines” as the only realistic approach to today’s globalised world, and opposes it to both a naïve understanding of a synthesis of all disciplines as well as a pessimistic one of accepting the hegemony of science over all other discourses (2003: 213). In this spirit, the *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* not only includes submissions in the fields of arts and humanities, but also advertises for papers surveying the dialogue of the Victorian and post-Victorian eras in medicine, psychology, sexology, and studies in cultural memory (NVS “Aims and Scope” 2008); while Kucich and Sadoff’s *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000) connects social and political ideologies with economic production and reproduction, thereby reflecting on a range of art forms and technologies from photography to computing. As its title also suggests, Krueger’s *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time* (2002) examines how nineteenth-century cultural paradigms resurface in today’s sciences like pedagogy, psychology and law, as well as in a wide spectrum of material culture including clothing

²⁹ The same critic already promoted rewriting as an alternative tool to critical interpretation in an article ten years earlier (Lefevere 1985: 222).

and furniture. The relationship between such areas of commodity culture and literary production constitutes the main object of Christoph Lindner's *Fictions of Commodity Culture: From the Victorian to the Postmodern* (2003), where the author surveys novelistic responses to commodification reading nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts together. Here fiction is not read for its own sake but to demonstrate social responses to economic changes, in other words, as texts for illustrating contexts. His argument that the nineteenth-century roots of commodity mainly lying in production have by now shifted to consumption (15) can be associated with a seemingly parallel move in the field of literature, namely the one from writing to rewriting, that is, from the production of literary works to their reception and reproduction.

This expansion of interest in rewriting and reinterpreting the Victorian has also interacted with some changes in postmodern theories of thought and political movements in the fields of feminism, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism or nationalism studies, affecting racial, sexual, economic and social policies. This was accompanied by practical political and cultural influences, like the Thatcherite appropriation of Victorianism thoroughly surveyed in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (1991) edited by John Corner and Sylvia Harvey. Together with the above-described mass production and consumption of Victoriana, these influences affect changes in various cultural and material perceptions, from marketing trends to literary prize distribution and concepts of identity as Richard Todd elaborates in his *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today* (1996) or Luke Strongman frames in his *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* (2002). These theories and practices in different discursive sites of identity formation from the 1980s onwards are examined in more detail in the next chapter. The common motivating factor for researchers of the described disciplines, discourses and contexts engaging with the post-Victorian phenomenon seems to be precisely its immense range, popularity and possible prestige, which they are trying to identify and explain in different but overlapping ways.

Perhaps one of the most important theoretical implications of post-Victorian fiction is that it invites current redefinitions of postmodernism. The chronology of the postmodern period until now could be constructed as follows: it witnessed a revolutionary phase in the sixties, conventionalised these changes during the eighties, to reach its present phase with a

tendency to juxtapose its own paradoxes. In Hungarian scholarship it was Ferenc Takács who first applied the term *postmodern* when interpreting American fiction in the seventies. He collects its distinguishing features, including the methods of imitation, parody and pastiche, as well as addressing the issues of the relationship between fact and fiction or the paradoxes and playfulness resulting from the literary text's own fictionality (1978: 259). In his *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), Brian McHale outlines one of the central theses of postmodernism, claiming that while modernist fiction foregrounds epistemological issues, the dominant concerns of postmodernism are ontological (1999: 9-11). Alexander Marguerite questions this proposition in the early nineties, raising awareness that a number of late-twentieth-century British novels resist this distinction (1990: 22-23), and Gutleben explicitly disproves it in the case of post-Victorian texts (2001: 50-51). As it seems then, regarding today's state of the postmodern era and its artistic products, rather than arguing for their opposition, critics suggest a compromise between modernist and postmodernist features (Butler 2002: 125-127). Hence post-Victorian fiction may also facilitate a terminological correction to postmodernism. This may eventually mean a move to another "condition," by renaming it syncretism, thereby focussing on its inclusive strategies of amalgamating previous aesthetic traditions and synthesising opposing ideologies (Gutleben 2001: 220-223), and, if synthesis would be too far-fetched, a juxtaposition or peaceful co-existence of opposites can be envisioned. Similarly, as well as adding to the existing body of literature, the postmodern processes of adaptation and appropriation are interpreted as phenomena in the vein of Darwin and Derrida (Sanders 2006: 160), in other words, both evolutionary³⁰ and revolutionary, de- and reconstructionist. The restoration of the link between experimental writing and the tradition of realism provides an example of the current synthesising tendencies in postmodernism, as the literary critic Andrzej Gasiorek argues

[a]ny simple distinction between experimental and traditional writing has long ceased to be pertinent. What marks the fiction assessed here [examples of post-war British fiction] is precisely the interanimation of forms, styles and techniques. Attention to language's constitutive role, the doubleness inherent in

³⁰ Hutcheon also reads adaptation as evolution elaborating the parallel in a very becoming manner: "Evolving by cultural selection, travelling stories adapt to local cultures, just as populations of organisms adapt to local environments" (2006: 177).

fictional representation, and the impossibility of unmediated access to the real, are everywhere apparent (Gasiorek 1995: 19).

Some critics even argue for the explicit return of realism into novelistic production after the experimental period of the 1960s. In his seminal work, *The Novelist at Crossroads and Other Essays*, David Lodge openly campaigns for the realist novel as a legitimate novelistic form at the end of the twentieth century:

This brings me to my conclusion, which is a modest affirmation of faith in the future of realistic fiction. In part this is a rationalization of personal preference. I like realistic novels, and I tend to write realistic fiction myself. The elaborate code of literary decorum that governs the composition of realistic fiction – consistency with history, solidity of specification [...] is to my mind a valuable discipline and source of strength (Lodge, 1971: 32).

A similar vein characterises critical observations of postmodernism: in addition to acknowledging its integrative propensity, it is also perceived as an era becoming increasingly referential, re-centring ethics and historical knowledge at the heart of academic enquiry. In this context the novel becomes an important epistemological tool, of which post-Victorian fiction functions as a significant indicator (Onega and Gutleben 2004: 14). This position receives further specification in the statement that post-Victorian novels take a crucial part in narrating historical memory and influencing political attitudes beyond Britain's former empire (Kaplan 2007: 162). The changing perception of the (Man) Booker Prize addressed in more detail in the next chapter provides an example of such an influence. In the last few decades, the Booker Prize has from time to time been awarded to post-Victorian novels, such as Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* in 1988 or A. S. Byatt's *Possession* in 1990. Other important works revising nineteenth-century historical events, like Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie* on the Crimean War or Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* on colonial Tasmania, have been short-listed. Accordingly, Luke Strongman's *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire* engages with English fiction as an active participant in the ongoing process of negotiating national and cultural identities, raising awareness of the importance of the critical capacities of novels in framing contemporary

historical reality.³¹ Hence these novels also function as memory texts³² or memory objects³³ similarly to commodities or other relevant sites of material culture, which provides a fruitful research subject for cultural memory and trauma studies.³⁴ Tamás Bényei even reads the contemporary historical novel, to which post-Victorian fiction belongs as well, as one of the praxes of cultural memory, assuming a mediating function between personal identity and collective memory (2005: 37-38). He argues that, for example, the symptomatic nature of postmodern amnesia structured according to the non-linear temporality of trauma illustrates how the cultural understanding of history has changed, in this case into a painful relationship to the past (40-41). These concepts related to cultural memory are employed in the analyses of the following chapters without further theorisation, as the study of cultural memory is not the major focus of this dissertation. Yet, the notions introduced are relevant for reading historical fiction, especially considering that both cultural memory and post-Victorian research are still emerging fields with an interdisciplinary status, therefore the overlaps of these two areas of investigation are likely to produce meaningful insights.

Historical relevancies evoked by the post-Victorian phenomenon inform various contexts from the point of view of cultural studies as well. One way to make use of Victorian theory and culture is to employ it in discussions of historical nostalgia. By attributing the appearance of modern conceptions of periodisation, history, or culture to the Victorian age, today's epistemological narcissism, and economic commodification can be emphasised

³¹ Due to their ever emphasised achievements in identity formation, especially concerning postcolonial and postimperial identities, other important Booker-winning novels, such as Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) also belong to the list of texts actively concerned with the legacies of the empire as well as with narratives of identity. It is important to acknowledge that these items would have a place in Chapter 2 where these issues are elaborated; however, since I exclusively focus on post-Victorian fiction in my dissertation, they are not discussed in more detail.

³² *Memory text* is used in accordance with other critics' application of the term to denote historical fictions which aid in constructing historical periods as part of our cultural memory. See Annette Kuhn's "Memory and Textuality" (2005: 15-23) for a general context or Kate Mitchell's "Ghostly Histories and Embodied Memories: Photography, Spectrality and Historical Fiction in *Afterimage* and *Sixty Lights*" (2008: 81) for a specifically post-Victorian one.

³³ *Memory objects* are understood as material items or their records (in case of already demolished or disappeared ones) that transmit and mediate individual and collective cultural memories. See Peter Stallybrass's "Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning, and the Life of Things" (1999: 27-44), which refers to cloth in this sense.

³⁴ Susana Onega's trauma studies project "Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary Narrative in English" running since 2008, for example, explicitly surveys contemporary fiction in English in this framework (See http://cne.literatureresearch.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=9).

(Kucich and Sadoff 2000: xxvi). This point of view echoes Fredric Jameson's attitude to historical fictions as a compensation for present day impotence to facilitate historical changes (Jameson 1996: 369). Instead of looking at post-Victorian novels as mere instances of wishful thinking, I would side with the argument for a more constructive application of our knowledge of Victorianism in a post-Victorian environment, using Victorian narratives to work out ways of being in the future (McGowan 2000: 24). Some even claim that the act of rewriting (understood in its widest sense including (re)interpretation) is a moral imperative so that we can live up to current cultural realities and their manifestations in critical thinking (Bryant 2002: 177).³⁵ The case studies of Chapters 3 and 4 are conducted with such an understanding of the ethics of rewriting.

The examined debates contextualised in literary, film, and cultural studies, as well as theoretical and political movements, show that the post-Victorian phenomenon constitutes a fruitful discursive site for diverse ideological schools, which may also explain the popularity of post-Victorian fiction. As an inevitable appropriation creating anxieties concerning originals, definitions, or historiographies, the post-Victorian novel proves a typical postmodern site of easy corruptibility, as illustrated by the paradoxical explanations of its effects on literary conventions, the canon, reading habits and the postmodern era. Comparable to the aesthetic redefinitions of postmodernism, regarding its ideological implications for politics, history, and culture, the post-Victorian too features a terminological abundance in need of clarification. To what extent post-Victorian fiction is intertwined with current changes in the discourses of the postmodern is probably best illustrated by the fact that the same prefixes of neo-, reverse- or post- that are affixed to contemporary rewritings of Victorian fiction are also attached to words like feminism, colonialism, imperialism, nation, state or culture in the process of their reinterpretation.

As for the future, the paradoxical interpretations of post-Victorian fiction may result in further disciplinary changes. On the one hand, research into rewriting gives hope to critics

³⁵ There are counter-opinions as well: author Patricia Duncker has argued, for example, that post-Victorian fiction is short of moral and social issues because they have all been solved by now, hence contemporary post-Victorian novels do not have content, they are a mere theatrical backdrop (Duncker, 2008). Perhaps, post-Victorian fiction looks different in the authorial eye; however, the reading of a variety of post-Victorian texts is vital for making such statements, whereas Duncker's only example in this respect was Byatt's *Possession* (1990).

that a certain lost social potential can thus be restored to the study of literature strengthening the discipline (Lefevere 1992: 9). On the other hand, the current effort to save literary studies by reiterating and reforming the canon can soon work in another way, too, namely by pushing literature towards criticism. In some cases fiction is already regarded as both a cultural document and a form of criticism, which may imply a slow merging of literary criticism into cultural studies, as prognosticated by Antony Easthope in his *Literary into Cultural Studies* as early as 1991. Another consequence of this change may be that post-Victorianism becomes not only a theoretical, but also a more applied science, thus exemplifying the integration of humanities, explaining and predicting social and cultural changes.

The perception of post-Victorian novels as texts empowered by such an explanatory and facilitating force already serves as a reason in itself to produce and consume such works. In her general introduction to the first issue, Marie-Luise Kohlke, the editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies*, summarises this important political potential of the post-Victorian phenomenon in terms of trauma studies, claiming that similarly to the nineteenth century our own age is also characterised by a number of traumas asking for urgent memory work³⁶ (Kohlke 2008: 7). Areas of concern include the politics of the empire gaining new relevance with the attacks of 9/11 as well as a growing environmental consciousness hostile towards industrialisation due to ecological disasters caused by human irresponsibility (7-8). These areas could be amended by the reformation of narratives of identity, especially those of the nation, culture and womanhood, whose nineteenth-century roots, as critics argue, are crucial for the understanding of their present alterations (Kucich and Sadoff 2000: xx-xxi). Many items of post-Victorian fiction fulfil the task of pinpointing social inequalities and ideological manipulation characterising Victorian times, thereby also establishing historical legacies and contemporary parallels. Kucich and Sadoff claim the narrative of sexuality to be one of these legacies, where the contemporary demand for teleologies of sexual liberation is viewed as a never-ending reiteration of the Victorian duality of repression and revolution characterising this discourse (xxv). In addition to giving a voice to the silenced members of society marginalised on the basis of

³⁶ The author uses this term to denote ways of processing cultural events such as mourning (also referred to as grief work), commemorative practices and creating public and private memory (Kohlke 2008: 9). My use of *memory work* coincides with this definition.

sexual or racial prejudices, the issue of remedying class differences also seems to be on the critical agenda: “[t]he contrast between the harsh public ideology of the period and the poverty it sanctioned, and the fugitive domesticity of the middle classes, is both interesting in itself and as a forerunner of recent historical experience” (Gilmour 2000: 198).

The proliferation of traumas summons an understanding of the present as a moment of crisis, the narrativisation of which also leads back to the Victorian age, especially its last years. As Frank Kermode argues “for most of us the best known outbreak of *fin de siècle* phenomena occurred at the end of the nineteenth century; at any rate, it was in that century that the expression became current” (1966: 96). He maintains that this “sense of an ending” still dominates our lives enhancing narratives of decadence as well as renovation (98-100). So much so that the first collections on the post-Victorian phenomenon, namely Kucich and Sadoff’s *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000) and Gutleben’s *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001) are structured accordingly, calling the section discussing decadence “mystifications” and “fascination” and the one analysing renovation “engagements” and “revisitation,” respectively. Naturally, both works assume that the allure of rewriting the nineteenth century resides precisely in this possibility of producing double-faced narratives. This paradoxical quality of postmodern fiction also forms the basis of Sarolta Marinovich-Resch’s article “Nostalgic Postmodernism: Nostalgia and Subversion of Gothicism in A. S. Byatt’s *Possession*” (2003), where Byatt’s post-Victorian novel is analysed by focusing on such duplicity in the rewriting of the generic convention of the Gothic. This widely exploited potential of the co-existence of traditional and experimental uses of Victorian fiction as well as eighteenth and nineteenth-century generic conventions in post-Victorian adaptations means the satisfaction of the demands of a growing market of both professional and non-professional readers, as Robin Gilmour also argues (2000: 191). Writing in the apocalyptic spirit of an expected ending (of life on earth, a century or the Gutenberg galaxy), apparently allows for sensationalist techniques, such as the reinvigoration of the vitality of plot and character at the same time as remedying social ailments as well as for adapting suitable earlier genres such as crime, detective and Gothic fiction and experimenting with them in a postmodern context.

It is not only narratives but also social and cultural structures, not to mention substantial remains of architecture and other nineteenth-century objects, which John Sutherland

collectively calls Victorian mementoes, that equally legitimise the centrality of post-Victorian fiction (Sutherland, 2007). Sweet goes out of his way to give credit to the Victorians for many more such innovations and inventions than we are aware of from housing estates through free universal education and investigative journalism to fish and chips and the fax machine, just to mention random examples (2001: xii) and other critics also emphasise the popularising impact of the fact that we are surrounded by nineteenth-century material culture (Krueger 2000: xv). This affect of Victoriana on contemporary audiences is widely exploited not only in selling and exhibiting historical objects and their remakes, but also in the publishing industry, especially concerning marketing strategies for new editions of historical fiction or newly appearing post-Victorian fiction, from book cover designs to associations with films of the same subject, as shown in the next chapter. Thus, in addition to influencing the cultural objects themselves, such market schemes equally manipulate the representation of these objects, as Linder phrases it “commodities in postmodernity not only inhabit the material world, but have also colonised the realm of representation” (2003: 12).

Methodological reasons may also be involved in this compulsive return to the past, namely the possible reinstatement of multidisciplinary (Llewellyn 2008: 170). This could be connected to the current dissatisfaction with the isolated application of highly specialised critical discourses to matters of scholarly interest, signifying a desire to create dialogues among disciplines whose possible relations have so far been neglected. The resulting juxtaposition of texts and contexts, for example, the reading of fiction and criticism at the same level, may result in new ways of understanding history or offering alternative solutions to current socio-political issues. The fact that the questioning of the authenticity of historical narratives *per se* has materialised in various literary techniques which are employed in refashionings of the nineteenth century provides an appropriate illustration of such new ways of reading. The polyphony of voices, different versions of the same event, no ending or several alternative endings characterising such novels as well as the collection and analysis of such texts, for example by Timothy Gauthier in his *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations* (2006), prove how such a venture takes place on both the levels of fiction and criticism. Critics are sensitive to this current dialogue established with Victorian conventions and regard it as rewriting that is “to serve the critical needs of the present” (Flint 1997: 302) or “designed to bring the original text more in line with either

the expectations or current needs of a culture. The measure of a culture lies in the distance between the original's rhetorical strategies and those that emerge in these adaptive remakings of a text in our own image" (Bryant 2002: 110). In the next chapter I survey such main areas of discursive attempts to frame disappointment with current developments by voicing historical anxieties that contemporary theory revisits in connection with post-Victorian fiction.

Chapter 2. Post-Victorian fiction in its Social and Political Context

“That was the problem. None of it seemed very real, but I suppose that’s the trouble with history. It’s the one thing we have to make up for ourselves.”

Peter Ackroyd, *Chatterton* (1987)

Whereas in Chapter 1 I have focussed more on setting the terminological framework and establishing literary theoretical relevancies of the post-Victorian novel, with the survey to follow I provide the theoretical framework for the case studies in Chapters 3 and 4 by specifically looking at the social, political and economic environment post-Victorian texts have been produced and received in. First, I survey the literary scene contextualising authorship, readership, literary criticism and the market. The discussion includes the refocalisation of authorship and the context of celebrity culture connecting reader and writer by the establishment and maintenance of various meet-the-author forums. Prevalent reading techniques such as affective and plot-centred comprehension as well as the requirement of double reading specifically summoned by historical texts are also taken into consideration. I trace the pervasiveness of sensationalism and popular cultural tenets in producing and receiving post-Victorian fiction on the basis of closely looking at one of its marketing strategies, book cover design. The way the publishing industry exploits visual culture thereby activating various critical discourses leads to the analysis of literary criticism and frictions therein. My main points of concern here are the split between academia and literary journalism and how the framework of cultural studies interspersing high and low culture may assist in remedying this problem. This new framework of criticism assumes new critical praxes as well which are determined by an awareness of the ideological nature of rewriting involved in producing and reading post-Victorian fiction.

Second, I delineate historical changes in identity narratives, with special focus on those triggered by postcolonialism and post-imperialism, through surveying the last thirty years’ output of post-Victorian fiction. Since such novels engage in rereading the past by offering alternatives to existing narratives and achieve this upholding historical continuity by making Victorian times correspond with the present, they may serve as especially effective identity-forming devices. Graham Swift’s *Waterland* provides an example of the

intermingling of (post)colonial and (post)imperial narratives in search of a national identity, acknowledging colonial atrocities at the same time as escaping from them into accounts of natural history. The juxtaposition of readings of Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* proves how changes in the discourses of the nation and culture reverberate in various critical approaches to fiction. In particular, I discuss the contexts of the eighties' narrative of heritage and enterprise, the nineties' cultural policy culminating in the millennium celebrations and the current trend of liberalising political attitudes to remembering. Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*, A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and Graham Swift's *Ever After* supply novelistic examples of another typical anxiety of the eighties and the nineties when constructing national and cultural identities: the fear of reverse colonisation. Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights* and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* show how cultural criticism works at present employing cultural objects as aids for the production of memory narratives, aiming at creating and transforming identities. The closing analysis of the overlaps between the interests of post-Victorian fiction and the (Man) Booker Prize, which both *Oscar and Lucinda* and *Possession* received, links the literary scene and narratives of identity thus connecting the two subchapters to follow.

2.1 The Literary Scene: Authors, Readers, Criticism and the Market

In line with the less experimental and more referential, less text- and more author-based phase of postmodernism we are experiencing at present, the notion of the death of the author introduced by Roland Barthes in the 1960s and promoted ever since seems to gradually be fading away. At the end of the eighties David Lodge, who has always been a strong supporter of realist fiction, takes a stance against text-based criticism (Lodge 1990: 14-21). Arguing against Barthes's notion of the death of the author and de Man's denial of a relationship between text and reality, Lodge makes a strong case for the author-centredness of novelistic production and reception emphasising the perspective of the writer: "The foregrounding of the act of authorship within the boundaries of the text which is such a common feature of contemporary fiction, is a defensive response, either conscious or intuitive, to the questioning of the idea of the author and of the mimetic function of

fiction by modern critical theory” (1990: 19).³⁷ In his book *The Death and Return of the Author* (1992), Seán Burke traces how the absence of the author is theorised in anti-authorial discourses through conducting a close reading of texts by Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. He argues that the exclusion of the author by textual criticism is problematic per se. Authorial subjectivity cannot be theorised in such a framework, while it is impossible to expel it from criticism, which makes (the question of) the author an “unquiet presence” in theory. Amongst others he lists authorial intention, influence and revision as important authorial functions that cannot be circumvented when analysing texts (1993: 173-174). Similarly, Hutcheon emphasises that in adaptation theory, naturally involving influence and revision, the role of intentionality should be seriously considered, “even if this means rethinking the role of intentionality in our critical thinking about art in general” (2006: 95).

As it emerges from these critical works as well, authorship is being reinstated together with its ensuing discourses of authority, authenticity, mystification and cult,³⁸ acquiring a similar degree of popularity it was characterised by in the nineteenth century. Many critics draw parallels between Victorian and present-day manifestations of the central position of the author in public literary discourse. After Jane Gaines, James F. English and John Frow argue that values attached to nineteenth-century authorship resurface in different terms in today’s context: thus the Victorian signature and copyright respectively have become a brand name and an exchangeable trademark of the present (2006: 48-49). As the authors claim, the fame of Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde is comparable with that of J. K. Rowling and Jeanette Winterson (39-40). Although his main focus lies in the Victorian scene, Bradley Deane similarly makes a direct connection of the past with the present already in his introduction: “Yet the legacy of the nineteenth-century author refuses to be laid to rest. In the twenty-first century literary marketplace, authorial cults of personality continue to drive production and consumption” (2003: ix).

³⁷ As one of the consequences of recentring the writer, literary biographies have also been gaining more importance, as the case-study of the Henry James novels and the brief survey of Dickensiana in the fourth chapter demonstrate.

³⁸ “The reception of new writing has in fact probably never been more obsessively author-centred than it is today, not only in reviewing, but in supplementary forms of exposure through the media – interviews and profiles in the press and on TV, prizes public readings and book launches and so on. All this attention is focused on the author as a unique creative self, the mysterious, glamorous origin of a text” (Lodge 1990: 15-16).

Such cults turn authors into celebrities, to stick with contemporary terminology, who have to satisfy their public's demand, which sounds very much like a Dickensian moral imperative continuously repeated in Gaynor Arnold's fictional biography of a famous Victorian writer modelled on Dickens: "'Holiday? The One and Only [the celebrity author] is never on holiday! The One and Only is a slave to his Readers. They suck me dry. When I die, I shall be found a mere *skelington*, a bag of bones, sans *hair*, sans *teeth*, sans *eyes*, sans *everything*.' He laughed, not at all daunted at the thought." (Arnold 2008: 138). Dickens is made into a celebrity not only in Arnold's novel but also in the theme park Dickensworld (<http://www.dickensworld.co.uk>). This place of edutainment housing Dickens as a celebrity offers fun for visitors by letting them experience sights, sounds and smells of the Victorian age through participating in simulated events related to Dickens and his novels, such as The Great Expectations Boat Ride, where they can follow events of the novel, especially the journey of Magwitch. At the same time, the facility provides educational packs on the famous nineteenth-century author and his age, which interactively relate one of Dickens' texts or set up an interview with a Dickensian character whom pupils can ask questions about correspondences of the Victorian times to the 21st century. By this projection of celebrity culture onto Victorian times and real as well as fictional characters, the historical author's life and circumstances are devoted more attention than his authorship. Some even busy themselves with envisioning Dickens in the twenty-first century, claiming that, complying with the technology and reading or viewing habits of our times, he would qualify more as a screenwriter than a novelist (Earl, 2008).

This myth surrounding authorship has both economic and socio-political implications. If an author publishes a work that wins a literary prize, inspires a movie-adaptation or otherwise sensationalist reactions, s/he acquires a celebrity position which puts her/him on the market. This position and the accompanying market value vary according to the real or assumed interest of the audience, as Richard Todd phrases it "contemporary fiction is retail-driven" (2006: 20). Therefore, as English and Frow argue, authorship becomes a corporate marketable item fuelled by media-based brand management (2006: 41). Reading authorship in similarly economic terms, John Sutherland claims that the myth of the author is often largely manipulated by the market. He provides the example of two contemporary campus novel writers and critics with parallel careers, David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury, whose identities were blurred as part of a guessing game emplotted for the

entertainment of the audience, which resulted in perceiving them for a long time as one and the same person (Sutherland 2006: 122). From such moves the myth of authorship emerges as a cultural effort of collaboration rather than individual efforts.

The socio-political potential of authorship gaining strength in the nineteenth century has currently also been reemphasised. Deane characterises authorship as a site of projection of hopes and anxieties of Victorian society (2003: xi), which function eventually led to a pragmatic social influence nineteenth-century writers were endowed with (29). In an age that lacks social and political models, this renewed authorisation of writers as public figures is not surprising. In Britain this may be especially true, since besides the manipulated winners of reality shows or games aspiring to the status of social heroes³⁹ and the politicians who keep losing face in the continuously uncovered instances of corruption, the scandals of the nineties have also curtailed the authority of the royal family.⁴⁰ In this context the speculative question arises whether the post-Victorian reaching back to famous Victorian authors, texts and conventions could spring from similar considerations: do contemporary authors reinvigorate well-known historical material to make up for the missing models of current times in order to become famous? Could the publishing of post-Victorian fiction then be perceived as a market-driven move today's authors make for self-fashioning? Or does the act of rewriting enhance the reinstatement of (the prestige of) authorship? Having acquired a celebrity status, writers enter the now again fashionable "meet the author culture" (Todd 2006: 29) where they can contact their audiences on various forums from television appearances through reading tours to online chatrooms (Todd 2006: 34-36, English and Frow 2006: 50). On the one hand, such a public presence definitely assists in marketing their products; on the other hand, in the attaching themselves to important causes they also fulfil social and political functions.

This context of celebrity culture developing around the novelist's person encourages a positive reception of their work as well. The establishment or encouragement of reading

³⁹ A recent example for the latter would be *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), a movie about a young Indian boy winning the lottery-wheel, where the game was debunked as highly manipulative ruining more people's lives.

⁴⁰ Their diminishing authority has seemingly also pushed the members of the royal family into a more popularistic celebrity status summoning further sites of engagement that increase their vulnerability, such as the movie *The Queen* (2006), which is harshly critical of their behaviour during the scandals around Princess Diana's death, or news items and tabloid articles appearing ever since reporting on the deeds of Princes William and Harry.

groups for debating on various pieces serves as an effective means to increase the popularity of writers' work (English and Frow 2006: 46-47). This strategy nicely ties in with both the reintroduction of the series and the again fashionable sequelisation of literary texts addressed in the previous chapter. Instalments can be digested more easily than whole novels and their discussion in groups also proves more straightforward. In some cases the actual publications provide questions to guide the audience in such discussions. Michel Faber's 2003 Harvest edition of *The Crimson Petal and the White*, for example, closes with a list of questions under the heading "Reading Group Guide" (901-905),⁴¹ followed by an advertisement of three novellas by the same author to be published, so that people can remain addicted to the same author if they wish and keep to book club going as well. This chain shows how the sequel proves to be an effective means of production "generated by the cultural and material conditions of authorship" (Budra and Schellenberg 1998: 15). Sutherland also envisions the future of reading in reading groups which seem to function as a current means to save the Gutenberg galaxy. He argues that books maintain their popularity not only because of their materiality making the connection with the text more immediate and practical, but also for their privacy not allowing any mediation into the private act of reading, such as tracking or recording that takes place when using the internet (Sutherland 2006: 31-41). Apart from adjusting to current reading practices, reading groups also maintain a community-building power, enabling the formation of discussion groups with common issues of interest.

However, in terms of cultural studies, following the Althusserian and Foucauldian tradition of perceiving literature as an ideology-forming institution, post-Victorian fiction also functions as an educational device. As such, it does not only change social and political attitudes, but also affects reading habits. For the understanding of a twentieth-century or later rewriting of a nineteenth-century text, depending on the focus, readers need to familiarise themselves with actual Victorian authors, texts, events or conventions. This means that post-Victorian fiction requires a certain level of double reading, as Humpherys

⁴¹ Such reading guides would be worth examining to establish different interests (or interest groups) influencing readers. In this case, beside the general questions of examining characters' relation to love, religion and science, more questions encourage readers to compare the nineteenth century with the present in a wide range of subjects from plot development to literary achievement (especially questions nr 2, 8 and 14), the final one asking them to speculate on figures' future. All these queries point towards the importance of historical consciousness and the sequel phenomenon.

phrases it, “[t]he reader must interpret two texts at once” (2005: 445) that constitutes a much greater challenge than traditional ways of reading. Readers learn about nineteenth-century and contemporary culture simultaneously, not to mention the rewriting of these they experience at the same time, which appears especially well-plotted in Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969). In this novel the (author-)narrator has a mediatory function facilitating reader access to both ages by using twentieth-century references and bases of comparison for the explanations and interrogations of his nineteenth-century text-construction. For these he uses various texts from a wide range of disciplines of both ages and integrates them in diverse modes of writing from metacomments within his Victorian narrative to devoting a whole analytical essay-like chapter (Chapter 35) written in the style of a hundred years later including footnote remarks. Such a double reading method also affects the canon: new items rewriting history and theory may be added to it in parallel to the recanonicalisation of historical texts that have been omitted or forgotten. Lefevere also emphasises that the canon-forming importance of rewriting earlier texts invests cultures with power (1985: 241).

Another change in enhancing reader response seems to be a turn towards the emotional versus the rational. As pointed out by Bo Lunden, *Possession* amply illustrates this change by showing the limitedness of mere intellectual endeavours, offering a plot resolution through the activation of affective capacities only. Roland has a possibility to become a famous researcher because he follows the impulse to steal a manuscript but he emerges as a future poet instead concentrating on his own emotions; similarly, the other researcher, Maud’s coldness recedes once she discovers family ties with a historical author awakening the feeling of belonging and she finds happiness in her promise of a harmonious relationship with Roland (1999: 113-125). The critic underlines that one cannot neglect the insistence of such novels on “(re)educating their readers by suggesting alternative modes of knowing as a way to confront intellectual practice” (132). Other scholars also emphasise the “politics of affect” as a feature strongly influencing mass culture, which can thus capitalise on readerly desire, specifically stressing sensational fiction as its main forum (Jaffe 2005: 438). Utilising emotion for plot resolution is likely to incite changes in generic choices when rewriting Victorian fiction as well, with a preference for genres like

steampunk,⁴² science fiction, romance, Gothic, crime and detective novels and eventually graphic novels, some of which I discuss in Chapter 4. *Possession* belongs to the most popular ones of the listed genres: it shows features of the Gothic, romance, sensation and detective fiction alike. The desire that motivates reader demands for sequels of earlier stories may thus overlap with reasons for authorial inspiration to rewrite them, namely “[a] fascination with a character, a storyline, or a world which has been created, or even a desire to rewrite a story that has proven unsatisfactory” (Gillies 1998: 132). In *Possession* most of these seem to be on offer: a fascination with the texts and secret lives of Victorian poets resembling the Brownings and Christina Rossetti driven by the quest for truth, knowledge, love and identity inspires the nineteenth-century text-construction. In the twentieth-century plotline such sensibilities also get activated but the possibility of arriving at any sensible result through their utilisation is strongly denied. Yet, the scientific theories feeding this denial are gradually deconstructed and the impersonal and emotionless present finally changes into a promise of the imagined past rich in affect and creativity.⁴³ This presents a representative example of how cultural revision takes place by refashioning source texts, topoi or historical eras to resemble the worldview or satisfy the desires of contemporary audiences.

The sensation invited by the strategies of double reading and reading for plot also materialise in book cover designs of post-Victorian novels by being similarly suggestive of the well-known Victorian and the unknown new trait to it, so that the element of secrecy is, again, strongly emphasised. The brief survey to follow illustrates how devising and marketing book covers incite and respond to readerly desires.⁴⁴ The most popular cover image of post-Victorian novels seems to be the figure of a Victorian woman. Yet, the perception of this figure undergoes continuous revision. Instead of providing a full-size picture of the featured female character, mostly only a part of her body is visible indicating some mystery to decipher. D. M. Thomas’s Duck edition of *Charlotte: The Final Journey of Jane Eyre* (2000) has a woman in full travel outfit, so we want to find out where she is

⁴² For a definition of steampunk see Llewellyn 2008: 181 footnote 7 and the newest issue of NVS (3.1) titled “Steampunk, Science, and (Neo)Victorian Technologies.”

⁴³ Bényei provides a detailed analysis of the novel in this respect, connecting the understanding of the past and reading myth with self-cognition in “‘Imperfections and Reflections’: Allegories of Reading the Past in A. S. Byatt’s *Possession*” In: *A tűnődések valósága. Írások Sarbu Aladár 70. születésnapjára [The Reality of Ruminations. Writings for Aladár Sarbu on his 70th birthday]* (2010: 349-361).

⁴⁴ See Appendix 1.1 for the cover images of the editions to be mentioned in the survey.

going; while on the cover page of John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* published by Vintage in 1996 there is a woman in black hiding in the bushes behind a wall, again promising of a secret to be uncovered. Tindal's edition of Gaynor Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008) features a nineteenth-century lady half hidden by a flowery drapery and seated in an armchair ready to tell her story, and on the front cover of Jane Harris's Faber and Faber-published *The Observations* (2006) a Victorian woman is sitting holding a book or diary and just about to open it, both implying narrative revelations. Clare Boylan's *Emma Brown*'s 2004 Abacus edition shows a woman's hands holding a white flower suggesting innocence and some future that awaits her, similarly to Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* on whose 2003 Harvest-edition cover only the white bed sheets and red curtains⁴⁵ imply a likewise progress from innocence to experience or girlhood to womanhood.

In addition to emblematic fictional characters, (in)famous historical persona equally frequently constitute the topic of post-Victorian texts. Novels on nineteenth-century writers mostly feature an image of the subject of the literary biography, like the 1991 Mandarin edition of Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens*, or the subject in his surroundings, like Henry James in Venice on the cover of Colm Toibín's *The Master*'s Scribner edition of 2005 or the same author bowing in front of his theatre audience in David Lodge's 2005 Penguin edition of *Author Author*. Whenever the emphasis is on the scenery where the story takes place, the book cover has an image of that only, suggesting that it has considerable impact on both the plot and the characters. So the sea (in the setting sun or reflecting the fire as a reigning element in the novel) determines the front cover of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* published by Penguin in 1968, a blurred image of Thornfield Hall and environs suggestive of a number of secrets decorates Emma Tennant's 2003 edition of *Adèle: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* and Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights* (2004) has a black-and-white picture of an Indian setting signifying the importance of photography as a memory technique.

⁴⁵ Bényei notes that among other intertextual references, this cover picture taken from the Fragonard's painting *The Bolt*, underlines the novel's connections to the eighteenth-century as well (2006: 28). Interestingly, the couple on the right hand side of the painting about to make love does not appear on the book cover, only the image of the empty but suggestive bed gets adopted thus emphasising the novel's subversive qualities.

The publication history of *Adèle* sets a special case, as the cover designs change with the titles of later editions probably because a wider audience is targeted. Maia Books published the novel under the title *The French Dancer's Bastard: The Story of Adèle from Jane Eyre* (2006) featuring a woman's waist in corset, not showing but implying the rest of the dancer's (or her daughter's?) uncovered body, obviously playing more heavily on the first part of the title and the excitement it may cause. *Thornfield Hall: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* (2007) brought out by Harper seems to have exchanged the name of the narrator of the first publication to that of the location of the plot and the image of Thornfield Hall on the cover of the 2003 edition to the image of a Victorian woman peeping out of the window who most likely represents the narrator, Adèle. The reasons for these alterations may be manifold; yet, *Jane Eyre* is a common point of reference in all three titles and Adèle also needs a more effective identification either by emphasising her dubious origin in the title or by putting her on the cover page to be identified with the teller of Jane's hidden story to help the reader place her in the original story. Some critics even treat different editions as a certain type of rewriting calling them versions based on the claim that variation in layouts and prints creates a different meaning (Bryant 2002: 66). Accordingly, the assumption behind the different titles and cover pages of these two latter editions of *Adèle* may be a cultural one, namely that the British audience, for whom the 2006 edition was intended, has more proximity to the original text and responds adequately to the narrator figure and the French connection, whereas the American audience, for whom the 2007 version was prepared, can relate more to the geographical location aided by historical visuals.

Similarly, in the case of novels adapted onto the screen, cultural differences on the recipients' side seem to be a motivating factor of designing diverse editions for such items. Besides stylised Victorian ones depicting a historical painting or other figurative art, usually these texts also have editions that feature the image of the movie poster presenting famous actors, probably aimed at audiences that have seen the motion picture and may subsequently turn to the book version. The 1997 Vintage edition of Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* features Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett impersonating the two leading characters and the 2002 Vintage edition of A. S. Byatt's *Possession* has Gwyneth Paltrow and Aaron Eckhart on its cover page. Not only the film version of novels or vice versa but also a male author adapting a female author's or an American film director an Australian or British writer's work mean a change of cultural context and ensuing market demands

(Hutcheon 2006: 28). In addition to the film (and stage) versions Hutcheon pays special attention to, the fascination with storytelling and the book as a medium of conveying it also strongly appear in publication designs of post-Victorian fiction. The motif on Belinda Starling's 2008 Bloomsbury edition of *The Journal of Dora Damage* imitates a journal sealed by a bookbinder (the image of which also includes a corset) and Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* published in 2003 by Penguin has a lock with a key in it fastened to a book on its front cover, both hinting at uncovering mysteries related to reading, writing and publishing, just like the male hand flipping through the pages of a manuscript on the cover picture of Tennant's *Felony: The Private History of The Aspern Papers* (2002) published by Jonathan Cape.

My account shows how designing book covers resonates with readerly desires and expectations and so functions as a marketing device to enhance sales figures. The intersection of literature and visual culture can; however, be used for various other interpretive purposes as well. In her keynote lecture at the Lampeter *Adaptations* conference, Ann Heilmann channelled a description of cover pictures of "incomplete" women into a feminist discussion of objectifying women. She argued that the essence of the exploitation women experience when the male/imperial or other appropriative gaze becomes obsessive can be collected into an emblematic image. Such images are displayed on some book covers reminding the reader of nineteenth-century freak shows as well as today's peep shows (Heilmann, 2008). The pieces the critic referred to are the above-described editions of Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* and Jane Harris's *The Observations* but the same reading could apply to the cover design of Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White*, which appropriates an eighteenth-century painting except the embracing couple leaving the viewer with the suggestive image of the empty bed lacking the bodies.⁴⁶ Kohlke reads the frontispieces of critical publications on the post-Victorian encounter surveying the nature of scholarly engagement in its relations to the past. Among others she refers to the covers of Krueger's *Functions of Victorian Culture at the Present Time*, which features Queen Victoria staring at her own reflection in a computer screen and the whole image is framed as a historical painting, and Kucich and Sadoff's *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, where

⁴⁶ Béneyi identifies the topic of the novel to be the female body and its narratives decipherable from the abundance of body metaphors all through the text (2006: 28) and thus the cover image as well.

the torso of a fully dressed Victorian woman is visible with her face hidden by her clothing.⁴⁷ The critic concludes that the obscure imagery most of these publications have may be symptomatic of our using the Victorians as a site of our own projections instead of properly defining and delimiting the critical praxes involved in current research (Kohlke 2008: 11-13). Hence, as all these critiques confirm, the visuals included into literary research prove fruitful illustrations of various cultural processes from theoretical and ideological discourses within disciplines to more interdisciplinary approaches intertwining authorial moves, readerly expectations, publication strategies and market values.⁴⁸

Such intermingling of aspects of high and low culture has become a controversy in contemporary literary criticism. Scholars argue that the increasingly professional and theoretical nature of critical discourse has widened the gap between the academia and literary journalism (Easthope 1999: 118, Bényei 2003a: 39). The same split survives into the present in Rónán McDonald's book tellingly titled *The Death of the Critic* (2007),⁴⁹ where the academic detachment of literary criticism is contrasted with other university disciplines like art and film which have managed to maintain their expertise on the public market as well. Social critics tend to blame the ivory tower literary criticism has become on exclusively text-based approaches to reading, especially those of New Criticism and deconstruction, which disregard referential interpretive frameworks thereby making literary studies lose its cultural relevance from the seventies onwards (Ashcroft 2001: 13). This isolation of literary studies within educational institutions, identified by some scholars as early as the beginning of the nineties (Lefevere 1992: 10), may have accelerated its slow disappearance as a self-standing academic discipline. Easthope prognosticates the collapse of the paradigm of literature on the basis of Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions, claiming that when a paradigm gets confused about its premises and becomes too theoretical, it dissolves and a new paradigm comes into being, which is how, as the critic maintains, literary has been replaced by cultural studies (Easthope 1991: 3). Perhaps the notion of replacement appears slightly radical: examining recent literary companions of various literary historical eras, the critical foci of literary and cultural studies rather seem to

⁴⁷ See Appendix 1.2 for the two frontispieces.

⁴⁸ In addition to visual culture, the application of cultural objects such as architectural mementoes, photographs and books provide similarly productive sites of interpretation as it is discussed in the next subchapter.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Aladár Sarbu for bringing the existence of this book to my attention.

be in the process of merging. Brantlinger and Thesing's *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2005) is, for instance, divided into three main parts: the first one examines historical and cultural issues, the second focuses on various novelistic forms and the third part is theoretical, mainly oriented at reception and adaptation also introducing twentieth-century remakes of nineteenth-century fiction. English's *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (2006) also has three main sections with similar divisions but slightly different emphases: the first part is devoted to some aspects of the literary market, the second examines how changes to the empire have influenced postmodern British fiction and the third one surveys emerging novelistic genres.

Post-Victorian fiction and its criticism seem to respond to these changes in the critical discourse by attempting to synthesise elitist and popular aspects of reading,⁵⁰ therefore they do not fit into academic literary criticism in the strict sense and increasingly tend towards the interpretive framework of cultural studies. This is also apparent from the range of topics discussed in the collections devoted to the study of post-Victorian novels, the premises laid in the introductions of those analyses, not to mention their titles which more often than not include the term *culture* (Kucich and Sadoff 2000, Krueger 2002, Gay, Johnston and Waters 2008). The criticism of the Victorian novel is claimed to have played a significant part in this move from literary towards cultural studies (Jaffe 2005: 425). Moreover, the Victorian era is regarded as an especially appealing point of reference for rewriting in terms of inciting cultural changes, since it was an age particularly prone to "cross-fertilisation between the high and the low arts" (Sanders 2006: 121). Yet, one should not forget that the critical re-evaluation of the Victorian has largely been inspired by the post-Victorian. Ben Earl argues, for example, that even though the interpretation of the theme park Dickensworld divides critics and consumers into serious readers and buyers into the Disneyfication of the historical author, the figure of Dickens eventually emerges as one connecting high and low culture rather than separating them (Earl, 2008).

⁵⁰ The postmodern permeability between high and low culture has been promoted by some prominent critics since the seventies: "What the final intrusion of Pop into the citadels of High Art provides, therefore, for the critic is the exhilarating new possibility of making judgments about the 'goodness' and 'badness' of art quite separated from distinctions between 'high' and 'low' with their concealed class bias" (Fiedler 1972: 78); "What I am calling the Great Divide is the kind of discourse which insists on the categorical distinction between high art and mass culture. [...] This second major challenge in this century to the canonized high/low dichotomy goes by the name of postmodernism; and like the historical avantgarde though in very different ways, postmodernism rejects the theories and practices of the Great Divide" (Huyssen 1988: viii). I am grateful to Ákos I. Farkas for the suggestion of these sources.

This immersion of literary into cultural studies, in other words, reading literature as culture (Jaffe 2005: 437) seems to be happening in parallel with another change that takes place in identity discourses. Fiction and criticism are both closely related to national identity, the discursive roots of which are traced back to empiricism (Easthope 1999) and liberal humanism (Schwarz 1986). Therefore changes in national identity triggered by the decline of the empire also produced narratives of the decline of the novel (Bényei 2003a: 69). As historical and political circumstances change, there seems to be a shift from the insistence on national identity to attempts at defining cultural identity (Easthope 1999: 228). Bill Ashcroft traces the transformation of English into cultural studies in the framework of postcolonial theory, claiming that postcolonial literatures in English have assumed a major role in this process. In the last century English departments promoting British cultural values were established in colonial settings as assertions of imperial hegemony (2003: 2). The discipline in this form has been deconstructed by allowing both a wider range of cultural material including popular texts and highly inventive postcolonial fiction to complement or even outlaw the high culture associated with the English literary canon (7-8). Hence, the change in the discourses of identity discussed in the next subchapter translates into disciplinary renewals as well: cultural studies and cultural memory are gradually emerging as fields of teaching and research, and through their interdisciplinary nature they enhance the production and reception of new sites and narratives of identification. The terminology of these fields, such as heritage, nostalgia and trauma, frequently features in analyses of post-Victorian fiction as well.

This reinvigoration of the nineteenth-century blending of high and low culture, the reintroduction of the concept of culture into the centre of critical discourse, hence the term cultural criticism, have all made cultural revision into a critical premise as well as a political act: the revisions of texts are revisions of culture which require new analytical skills and new “critical thinking based on difference, variation, approximation, intention, power, and change” hopefully leading us to democracy (Bryant 2002: 177). As this remark shows, revision is perceived as a crucial tool in shaping our culture, implying that both fiction and criticism engaging in the act of revision have ethical responsibility. In terms of criticism this means a possible revisitation of authorial intention, which may well follow the reinstatement of authorship in process now. Bryant lists a number of critical notions to rethink, which is an attitude shared by Hutcheon who likewise urges for a scrutiny of

political and historical intentionality in rewriting (2006: 94). Post-Victorian fiction is by definition based on revision. Having the author and socio-political factors in view, only too apparent from the critical terminology delineating the nature of revision from postcolonial to postfeminist or postimperial, post-Victorian fiction assumes a major part in such a possible reshaping of critical praxes. Scholarly terminology including the above and other terms like postnational or postmodern all affixed by post- also assumes a previous state of affairs just like post-Victorian does, thus the historical and political analysis of discourses of identity-formation in post-Victorian texts may have implications for adjustments in the language of research as well.

2.2 Narratives of Identity in Post-Victorian Fiction

As the novel is perceived as a tool of creating both identity and history, it takes a crucial part in working out discourses of the self, the nation and culture as well as the past. Victorian critics commonly attributed the emergence and popularity of narrative fiction to the establishment of political democracy and the ensuing interest in the individual (Childers 2005: 414), which became a widely shared view in the twentieth century on the basis of Ian Watt's 1957 classic, *The Rise of the Novel*. Some contemporary critics also maintain an association of the novel with various discourses of identity, narrowing their focus to postimperial and postcolonial developments. Patrick Parrinder closely relates the rise and decline of the English novel to the rise and decline of the British empire (2006: 2) and foresees the twenty-first-century function of English fiction as an active participant in the ongoing process of negotiating national identity (414). Brian W. Shaffer reads the history of British fiction as the history of colonialism and decolonisation and categorises English language novels accordingly (2006: 15-30). These contexts are closely intertwined with post-Victorian fiction, since in novels of this type questions of identity are addressed through rereading historical processes of the past with specific relevance to the present. Hence, adaptations are perceived as inherently critical acts (Bryant 2002: 110), correcting past narratives according to present needs involving colonial and imperial legacies in particular. Also assuming the status of political acts, refashionings are particularly prone to expressing political alternatives to ones that have proved unsuccessful earlier (Sanders 2006: 97-98). Post-Victorian novels have the temporal continuity of more than two centuries of accumulated knowledge and an even longer history of means employed to

express it, in fact, post-Victorian fiction has itself obtained a more than fifty-year history by now.

From the 1960s onwards, in parallel with the gradual loss of the empire, the ensuing devolution of British imperial power, and the movements of social and sexual liberation, questions related to redefining political power and integrating marginalised members of society became centralised in intellectual discourse. In terms of postmodern fiction and, within that category, post-Victorian literature this has meant an increasing amount of novels resuscitating silenced voices writing back to their oppressors as well as a number of texts admitting to British colonial follies of the past, along with a scholarly development and application of theories of feminism and postcolonialism in interpreting such fiction. Generally considered as the first post-Victorian novel, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) provides a genuine example of such writing, prompting a whole tradition of rewriting canonical Victorian texts and inspiring theoretical debates thereof. Since most *Jane Eyre* adaptations discussed in the next chapter build on this pioneering novel, I examine it in more detail there.

The other trendsetting work in the development of the post-Victorian tradition is John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). This text thematises most contradictory phenomena of the nineteenth century with inventive metafictional tools, thereby epitomizing the experimental novel of the sixties, not to mention the positive example it provides of the much debated viability of English fiction.⁵¹ The impressive inventory of Fowles's groundbreaking adaptation has since appealed to authors refashioning the same era both in terms of the topics addressed and the novelistic strategies employed. One of my main reasons for not conducting an in-depth analysis of this text is precisely its immense popularity and the ensuing overproduction of critical reactions to it. Consequently, its closer scrutiny would appropriate this dissertation in a similar way as the novel itself cannibalised the whole Victorian age. Rather than providing an overview of this tableaux of topics and conventions *The French Lieutenant's Woman* consists of, in the case-study chapters of my work I aim to examine novelistic chains rewriting canonised Victorian texts and subgenres based on specific nineteenth-century authors or events.

⁵¹ For more on these aspects of the Fowles text, see Ferenc Takács's "John Fowles: *A francia hadnagy szeretője*" [John Fowles: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*] (Takács 1996: 326-337).

Since the seventies were not very rich in post-Victorian fiction, my survey in this subchapter focuses on the next wave of such novels which came in the eighties and has persisted until the present. In this section I rely quite heavily on socio-political accounts of cultural events, as I mainly focus on various narratives of national and cultural identity, which are inherently politicised. In parallel to empowering so far neglected members of the empire that has been in process since the 1960s, an additional need to theorise national identity has emerged in the 1980s that was dominated by the Thatcher government's reintroduction of 'Victorian values.' As Patricia Waugh points out, this was based on equalling nineteenth-century conceptualisations of the nation-state with contemporary global British power (1995: 161), that echoed in heritage fiction, specifically the genre called natural history novel, often associated with escapism, nostalgia and isolation. According to Sally Shuttleworth, who provides this generic label, the natural history novel is a subset of retro-Victorian novels reconceptualising the nineteenth-century religion-science dichotomy in the face of the conservative government's social Darwinism strongly present in the eighties (1998: 253-254, 260).⁵² The interest post-Victorian fiction expresses for Darwinism seems more complex than just a reaction to specific social policies. As a possible synthesiser of postmodern ontological and epistemological concerns, this group of novels addresses the issues of faith and human evolution in more diverse ways out of which the interaction of these questions with actual political and cultural narratives constitutes only one aspect.⁵³

The withdrawal to the pastoral celebration of rural England the natural history novel could offer seemed an appropriate re-spatialisation of the national narrative in the process of coming to terms with territorial losses after the disintegration of the empire (Bényei 2003a: 142-145). This strategy of internal colonisation recalls nineteenth-century uses of the same

⁵² Shuttleworth includes various texts by Graham Swift and A.S. Byatt into her analysis, similarly to Daniel Bormann, who focuses on *Waterland* and *Possession* by the same authors while examining the role of science in neo-Victorian fiction in his *The Articulation of Science in the Neo-Victorian Novel: A Poetics (and Two Case-Studies)* (2002).

⁵³ Post-Victorian studies pay considerable attention to Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. At the Neo-Victorianism Conference (Exeter, 2007) there was a roundtable devoted to the topic, examining intersections of Darwinism, literature and biology and their possible theoretical consequences; Gutleben dedicates a section of his book to the discussion of the evolution-revolution dichotomy in post-Victorian fiction (2001: 204-216); and post-Victorian novels themselves reanimate Darwin(ism) in various ways, in particular A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and *Angels and Insects* (1992), Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992), Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992), Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie* (1998), Liz Jensen's *Ark Baby* (1998) and Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000).

approach. In her reading of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Nancy Armstrong argues that the process of internal colonisation, the Victorian novel can be regarded as part of, was happening simultaneously to the formation of the modern British empire in the middle of the nineteenth century. Drawing on Renato Rosaldo's concept of imperialist nostalgia, she theorises internal colonisation as an idealisation of regional cultures that were becoming peripheral or demolished in the modernisation process (1992: 446-447). Yet, while Victorian fiction mostly seems to romanticize the English countryside without paying much attention to empire-building destroying it, post-Victorian novels tend to appropriate this strongly nostalgic concept by more explicitly making it into imperialism's "other."

In Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) the described narratives of identity are juxtaposed. Exclusively set in and centred around England, the novel attempts to construct a national identity for the country by tracing its rural history and simultaneously deconstructing not only the glorious days of the empire but also the twentieth-century rhetoric surrounding it, both of which are exposed as escapism from current problems as the following two extracts of Thomas Crick's distressed narrative illustrate: "[those in power] had fed the people with dreams of inflated and no longer tenable grandeur, intoxicated them with visions of Empire (which ought to have been clouded for ever by the disgraces of the South African War), thus diverting their minds from matters nearer home" (161) and "during a great Depression which returns to haunt us in our own unprosperous times, Empire Day was regularly celebrated with no small enthusiasm (and no reference to brewery fires)" (179).⁵⁴ It is notable that the dark side of empire-building so often criticised in the seventies and eighties is, in both quotes, referred to in parentheses only. This may be because of the commonplace nature of the argument but possibly also to mark the unwillingness of those in power to face the less popular historical events they instigated, which is nicely subverted by these sentence markers.

⁵⁴ A similarly divertive attempt of national self-definition promoted by dominant political narratives is exposed in Beryl Bainbridge's *Master Georgie* where photos of dead Englishmen presented as pictures of living heroes of the Crimean war, published in the British Press to impress readership, become unveiled by the narrators.

This simultaneously evasive and subversive strategy is further underlined by the fact that the account of British imperialism is mostly presented as some kind of bed-time story not to be treated too seriously. What is serious, instead, is an exclusively English space, that of the fens and how man attempts to control the natural interaction of land and water. No coincidence that *Waterland* was so popular in The Netherlands (Todd 1996: 236) The natural history of the Fenland (its name implying this space as a possible country as well, if a national discourse was to require it) obviously overwrites all dominant conceptions of colonialism and the progress of culture, especially that of images of empires:

There is this thing called progress. But it doesn't progress, it doesn't go anywhere. Because as progress progresses the world can slip away. It's progress if you can stop the world slipping away. My humble model for progress is the reclamation of land. Which is repeatedly, never-endingly retrieving what is lost. A dogged, vigilant business. A dull yet valuable business. A hard, inglorious business. But you shouldn't go mistaking the reclamation of land for the building of empires (Swift 1983: 336).

This passage is ideologically suspect, for it is highly metaphoric, if only the meaning of the term “world” is considered which can practically be anything from the Fenland to any other external colony of the empire. The same is true for “slipping away” which may refer to land remaining unreclaimed just as well as to the losing of colonies, or for “progress,” the meaning of which shifts between development, the passing of time, expansion and conserving existing expansion. In this context, the last sentence, which warns against the confusion of internal and external colonisation, may also have a contrary effect. Thus, it may be claimed that though this passage is supposed to function as a counter-narrative to that of imperialism, still, by the dubious application of the same imperialistic discourse it opposes, this intention is undermined.

A similar disappointment of the initial expectations of a revision and correction of colonial discourse takes place in Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), also noted by its critics: “Carey shows in *Oscar and Lucinda* that what seems at first to be a broadening of cultural horizons, a re-addressing of the follies of a barbaric colonialism, is in fact the re-appropriation of the colonial impetus in a postcolonial form” (Strongman 2002: 95). The

heroine, Lucinda feels guilty being wealthy at the expense of the colonised: “This money did not belong to them [her parents], or to her either. The money was stolen from the land. The land was stolen from the blacks. She could not have it” (Carey 1997b: 104), yet, even if she has a bad conscience about this injustice, it does not stop her from becoming a gambler and a manufacturer, thus from partaking of the colonisation process. The same ambivalence can be observed in the descriptions of the general behaviour of the English as colonisers. Mr Jeffris directing an expedition that delivers a glass church to the colony gets entangled in conflicts with the natives leading to murder, which he acknowledges as the dark side of the colonising mission by statements like “Churches are not carried by choirboys” and “Neither has the Empire been built by angels” (401), yet he maintains his colonising view of the natives constructing them as the frightening dark “other”:

He was, himself, fearful of the blacks in the Manning and the Macleay. It was likely he would one day have to confront them himself. He attempted to explain their behaviour to Mrs Burrows [a woman whose husband was murdered by the black], not so much to calm her as to still, through explication, his own anxiety. These blacks, he said, were the most murderous of all, having been dispossessed of their lands and driven into the dense, tumbled country of the ‘Falls’ [...] She talked of calling out the army, of a final all-out war against the blacks (143).

All this is framed by the narrative of Oscar’s descendant in the 1980s attempting to reconstruct and understand the nineteenth-century events, still, the natives are not given space for self-expression throughout the text except for a short occasion which is the most enjoyable part of the novel. In the section in question (Chapter 100), probably narrated by one of the natives, the sentences become shorter and the indigenous narrative perspective seems at once to be innocent and ironic, freshly and subtly illustrating the point of view of peoples to be colonised:

The white man came out of the clouds of Mount Darling. Our people had not seen white men before. We thought they were spirits. They came through the tea-trees, dragging their boxes and shouting. The birds set up a chatter. What a

noise they all made. Like twenty goannas had come at once to raid their nests. Anyway, it was not nesting time (395).

Although to a lesser degree than in *Waterland*, there are reminiscences of the natural history novel in *Oscar and Lucinda*, except that here the beauties of England are not experienced as a reality but are presented in contrast to Australia as an imagined reality by the London-based Oscar, the male protagonist:

I am homesick for hedges and birds with pretty melody, for the lovely chalky blue sky of England. This colony seems so hard and new, all newly broken ground, much clay and sandstone, but nothing yet to make the soil friable. The birds are bright but raucous. Everything is lacking in gentility and care, and society as a whole (although better dressed than anyone in England could imagine) seems little concerned with the common good, only individual benefit (273).

His lived reality is mostly that of industrialised London, which, compared to the more natural Australia, seems an uninhabitable place for Lucinda who is based on the colony: “It was soon clear that this great sooty machine was not home at all” (168).

The mission of transporting a glass church to Australia for converting the natives to the imperial religion provides a convincing example of how cultural imperialism worked, and sometimes failed, in the colonising process. The novel follows this project from beginning to end. Its conception, inspired by the Crystal Palace,⁵⁵ is dominated by the aesthetic and economic experience of the construction process, which leaves the social value and future cultural context of this object largely neglected. The journey of the church is full of risks, including transportation difficulties due to its fragility, the fact that it almost falls prey to the gambling addiction of the protagonists, not to mention the warfare and lives it costs on the way. The ultimate failure of this mission is when the glass object shatters and finally sinks at the port of its destination, its creator soon to follow. As Jay Clayton points out, *Oscar and Lucinda* awakes the Crystal Palace’s nineteenth-century haunting presence in

⁵⁵ In Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White* the same inspiration is acknowledged in connection with the Rackham factories also working with glass (Faber 2003: 54, 209).

the colonial history of Australia on the level of its nineteenth-century plotline at the same time as its legacy in the 1980s influencing the identity of its narrator (2003: 17). The fate of the glass church and questions arising on both the Victorian and the twentieth-century narrative levels supply an interesting parallel to current readings of the Millennium Dome as a reconstruction of the nineteenth-century Crystal Palace and its accompanying discourses of cultural imperialism and identity-formation.

The beginnings of this parallel can be traced back as far as the 1980s when the dominant cultural discourse managed to intermingle the fields of industry, economy, politics and culture, thus translating aesthetic values into material ones. This translation can best be seen in the official endeavour of interrelating the concepts of heritage and enterprise to serve the Thatcher-administration's ideologies of national identity formation. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey explain how this connection of seemingly contradicting terms worked on different levels. Firstly, the idea of nostalgically constructing the nineteenth-century empire as a successful past, triggered sensibilities for making the inherited idea of progress into a cultural and industrial enterprise of the present and the future. Secondly, this connection was not only a theoretical image-production, but also an intermingling of terms that implied practical results: the already industrialised promotion of national heritage was gradually integrated in enterprise as a cultural attitude and practice. This materialised, for example, in an increase of private museums, achieved in the framework of privatisation, with changes in their profile from being purely documentary and educational institutions to becoming leisure-oriented theme-parks and fun-fairs attracting tourists and money (1991: 45-49). As the critics argue, "[i]n this sense, heritage and enterprise form together a key mythic couplet for preserving hegemonic equilibrium and momentum during a period of major national reorientation" (46).

This major national reorientation included many factors from the loss of the empire and the devolution of power to a greater differentiation of class, gender and ethnicity, all constituting a threat to the envisioned image of a consensually shared national identity. Marginalized groups who were theoretically included in the common narrative as owners of the "nation's values," actually experienced losses and exclusion (61-73). Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose give a detailed account of the racial and ethnic dimensions of this exclusion causing the postcolonial crisis in British intellectual discourse (2006: 8-22). In

his *Commerce and Culture* Robert Hewison reflects on how the implementation of Thatcherite cultural policies ruled out lower classes from sharing cultural narratives with the middle-upper ones. The critic claims that similarly to dominant narratives of the nineteenth-century (thus the most likely choice of this era as an ideological model), Thatcherite policies were also based on serving and preserving the assets of the ruling classes by exploiting all the others. (1991: 175). He exemplifies this with the process of privatising and integrating museums in free-market economy, which caused the destruction and restructuring of many entailing the loss of jobs, not to mention the rise of entrance fees making culture an often unaffordable commodity to a considerable percentage of the population (162-173). In his essay “Mrs Thatcher and Victorian Values,” Raphael Samuel provides an analysis of the Iron Lady’s disregard of or outright attack on substantial Victorian legacies despite her contrary rhetoric promoting the same, characterising Thatcher’s application of “Victorian Values” as “double-coded, a programme for the future disguised as a narrative of the past” (1999: 343).⁵⁶

Examples of post-Victorian fiction contextualising the Crystal Palace seem to be doing so from this background of inequalities and duplicity of communication, mainly emphatic of the issue of class. In Gray’s *Poor Things* the female narrator compares the male narrator’s diary to pompous Victorian narratives covering up for less desirable empirical realities including the exhibition space in a simile: “To me this book stinks as the interior of a poor woman’s crinoline must have stunk after a cheap weekend railway excursion to the Crystal Palace” (2002: 275). This image is fictionalised into the actual experience of the protagonist of Boylan’s *Emma Brown*: Emma travels to London by train which almost takes away all her money. When in London, she quickly becomes the victim of thieves and has to earn her living by begging. Her attire sticking to her hinders her in her job as it is too good for a homeless woman. She becomes feverish, faints in a church and is finally transferred to the workhouse infirmary. Still during her train journey she gets into a conversation with a poor Irishman about the Great Exhibition:

⁵⁶ This essay offers exceptional insights on the topic in a highly ironic tone. See, for example, the passage further describing the relationship indicated in the title: “Mrs Thatcher’s rhetoric of Victorian Values was, on the face of it, a remarkable example of a ‘political attitude’ struck for purely symbolic rewards. Except for the restoration of hanging – something for which she voted consistently whenever the issue of Capital Punishment came before the House of Commons – Mrs Thatcher showed no signs of wanting to translate it into legislative enactment or administrative practice” (Samuel 1999: 341).

He had told her he meant to make his fortune at an exhibition of all the world's wealth and industry, which was to be displayed in a glasshouse. When she asked who would be so foolish as to place treasures in a house of glass to which every thief would have access, he answered that it was the scheme of a foreign gentleman married to a rich little woman who wore her diamonds on her head (2004: 173-174).

This fear of stealing is echoed by middle-upper class critics labelling the exhibition as “bivouac of all the vagabonds in London” and “one of the greatest humbugs, the greatest frauds, the greatest absurdities ever known” (215). An additional anxiety voiced by the same people relates to foreigners. The location of the exhibition that is to house industry in the green, aristocratic Belgravia is seen as an intrusion into national honour (214), and the display of products from all over the empire is understood as a venture internationalising the country too obsessed with “its own nationhood” (216).

These last comments come from a novel published after the Millennium Festival. In this case the social context concerned that of New Labour, even though its nature did not change substantially. Political anxieties still circled around national identity and its narratives, possibly fictionalising the Millennium Dome as another attempt to recreate the Crystal Palace, both cultural failures. Such a reading is also supported by critical analyses of the topic. Starting out from the celebrations of the millennium, both Ken Worpole and Ronald R. Thomas maintain that New Labour continued the cultural rhetoric and policy introduced by the Thatcher-administration. Worpole surveys how during Labour's opposition in the eighties and nineties cultural studies had gained power in universities and intellectual circles resulting in rich cultural theory in the face of conservative politics promoting heritage and enterprise. However, as he points out, since the Labour government took office these theories do not seem to have become practice; in other words, the gap between cultural theory and policy still remains intact (Worpole 2001: 242). Thomas reminds his readers that Britain's millennium project was originally an idea proposed by John Major's conservative cabinet and, contrary to all expectations, Tony Blair did not kill but nourished the project converting its focus from the celebration of British private enterprise to symbolise New Britain as his campaign dictated (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 28).

There may be various reasons for this apparent conservation and continuation of the rhetoric of earlier years. As Ken Worpole maintains, they can be searched for in the general truth that cultural innovation takes place in sub or counter-cultures, that is political opposition, rather than as a result of official cultural policies (2001: 246). Or, as Jay Clayton argues, examining the phenomenon from an ideological background, the narrative of liberal thinking promoting cultural studies is based on similarly teleological tenets as the neoconservative one it counters. This means that neoconservatism reads the present compared to Victorian times as a linear narrative of decline, narrating the nineteenth century as an age of bliss, whereas liberal endorsers of the past take the Victorian age to be the beginning of scholarly conceptualisations of culture through which the present can be interpreted. As the critic claims, in the end they overlap since, “[d]espite their opposed agendas, both end up relying on similar conceptions of the historian’s task, which they see as that of producing a continuous, unified account of how the present has emerged from the past” (2003: 23). After the exhaustion of conservative as well as Labour rhetoric in the last thirty years, this interpretation seems most likely in the current political context.

In this framework of constructing cultural narratives, the Millennium Festival is symbolically read as a continuation of the Great Exhibition, even more so since the architect of the Millennium Dome made it clear that Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace served as his model (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 29). Both ventures are regarded as political and cultural disasters for their lack of internationalism as well as for the lack of clearly defined social aims or messages the monuments of the respective occasions were to convey, proving the claim that cultural programmes in Britain were created without accompanying cultural policies (Worpole 2001: 243-244, Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 31). The focus of both enterprises was to sell national identity, although in different terms. While the nineteenth-century Crystal Palace in London could still stand for the centre of empire both in spatial and temporal terms, the Millennium Dome in Greenwich only represented time of which the nation was still master (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 18-19),⁵⁷ therefore history emerged as the main commodity to sell (Clayton 2003: 11). However, instead of the nineteenth-century ideology of integration, ideas of British devolution were paired with the Millennium

⁵⁷ Even scientific measurements were subject to political pacts as the example of the acclaim of Greenwich mean time as zero point shows for which the French metric system had to be established as the international standard in return (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 24).

Celebrations (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 27), and the emphasis was less on a display of commodities to assist in defining the nation rather on experiencing diversity, spectacle, pleasure and leisure backed up by high-tech products (30). There also seems to be dissimilarity in location: whereas the Crystal Palace was put into the aristocratic green area of London, the Millennium Dome is an urban structure created outskirts near the estuary where commercial exchange takes place. Despite their differences the two monuments are read together as moments of cultural crisis.⁵⁸ The Millennium Dome is therefore inclusive of all previous historical ventures of this type, it functions as “the great emblem of what we might call postnational space, the nation as cybermemory of itself. It seemed to be offered as a palimpsestic recollection of the empire upon which the sun never set, of the Great Exhibition, of the Big Ben clock tower, of the prime meridian of the earth, and the place by which the world still sets its clocks” (Ronald R. Thomas 2002: 31), thus it serves as a cultural object, a commodity marketing national identity.

These readings mark how the discussions on heritage industry of the eighties described earlier transform into the cultural studies of the nineties, examining cultural mementoes not only as heritage centres, nineteenth-century relics or attempts at reinstitutionalising Victorian architecture but also as mainstream examples of edutainment, commodification and cultural imperialism. A non-post-Victorian but topically relevant and trend-setting fictional example prognosticating this transformation is Julian Barnes’s *England, England* (1998). This novel satirises the heritage industry by showing how the economic venture of collecting all national sights and entertainments onto the Isle of Wight leads to neglecting the mainland which becomes derelict and dangerous. Such a dystopian turn of events unmask the political narratives of the eighties and nineties attempting to define national identity based on the appropriation of Victorian discourses of the country’s assumed values:

You- we- England- my client- is - are- a nation of great age, great history, great accumulated wisdom. Social and cultural history – stacks of it, reams of it – eminently marketable, never more so than in the current climate. Shakespeare,

⁵⁸ Similarly to post-Victorian studies, efforts are also made in Victorian studies to deconstruct dominant narratives of the Great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace. See, for example, James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers, and Eileen Gillooly (eds.) *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press: 2007).

Queen Victoria, Industrial Revolution, gardening, that sort of thing. *We are already what others may hope to become.* This isn't self-pity, this is the strength of our position, our glory, our product placement. We are the new pioneers. We must sell our past to other nations as their future! (39-40)

This text proves a strong critique of the cultural policy of the eighties and the nineties as its frequent referencing in critical analyses of the same era shows. With explicit connections to the Millennium Celebrations the novel is summoned as a warning that the project creators may have taken into consideration when working on the historical potential of the Millennium Dome (Clayton 2003: 11) as well as a text prognosticating the economic failure of the celebrations (Parrinder 2006: 409). Not only economically but also on the level of ideas there seems to have been a crisis hilariously narrated in another, post-Victorian novelistic example, D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* where the person responsible for new ideas in the interior construction of the "giant pin-cushion in Greenwich" invents "a brain-shaped sort of punchbag, in the Body Zone, which would move about and speak jokes in the staccato style of our friend Ben Elton" (2000: 84) and later suffers a nervous breakdown from a complete lack of ideas when he has to create something for the Faith Zone.

The danger of exhibiting experience and idea(l)s instead of monuments and facts has already been pointed out in connection with the eighties and seems to equally hold for the nineties and the present. As Hewison describes, this process took place in the following way. Making museums part of enterprise culture was carried out as a justified act of conserving national inheritance, resulting in the passing of many National Heritage-related regulations and the establishment of Heritage Centres. The exhibits of these new types of museums also changed accordingly: instead of objects experience was provided, in other words, tangible historical material was changed into intangible images or manipulative devices of the ruling elite helping them to construct the past according to their interest and erasing individual cultural memory (1991: 173-177). An example of such an ongoing erasure seems to be the fate of workhouses. As Simon Dentith argues the fact that workhouses have been transformed into heritage objects or flats for rent "with parking for residents only," slowly diminishes the symbolic legacy their historiography conveys. He proposes to reinsert the workhouse into its historical landscape striving to free it from both

neoconservative and neoliberal ideological appropriations moralising the poor as a model for their own projects (Dentith, 2007). To come back to our fictional examples, there are readings of Graham Swift's texts that concentrate on individual narratives and how these recover from and attempt to process cultural traumas. Bill Unwin's account in *Ever After* invites interpretations in the framework of trauma narratives (Bényei 2003b: 49, Gutleben, 2008); and the above provided historiographic metafictional reading of Thomas Crick's recounting of his losses in *Waterland* also gets modified by critics perceiving the narrative as an equally strong statement in terms of the ethically-oriented psychological novel (Bényei 2003b: 41). In *Oscar and Lucinda* such effaced memories can be reinstated by examining the two protagonists' attitudes and the cultural contexts they are embedded in to the glass object to be transported, claims Clayton. He describes how the Crystal Palace representing London's imperial power in official narratives meant for Lucinda a number of things from her adoration of engineering instead of high art, her willpower, her preferences and desires not fitting the proper female behaviour of the age, which were understood by Oscar who was motivated by his passion for her and advanced the idea of transporting the wrong church to the wrong person in the wrong place. The traumatic narratives of their experience of being misfits read on many levels as a restoration of effaced cultural memories (2003: 18-19).

In fact, Clayton also draws an important methodological conclusion from his analysis, namely that the way the past can influence future historical cultural studies (opposed to its a-historical application) is to account for various and even contradictory modes in which history corresponds to the present (19). The Crystal Palace and its breakable materiality seems a particularly appropriate cultural icon to start the reconstruction of various individual and collective cultural memories. Not only Clayton refers constantly to the characteristics of glass, but also the editors of *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (2007) capitalise on the metaphorical qualities this word entails. The main aim of this contribution to Victorian studies is to re-examine the "transparency" (Buzard, Childers and Gillooly 2007: 1) accorded to the cultural memory of this object by revising narratives that "set this ephemeral Exhibition and the removable Crystal Palace in historical stone, *framing* them as distortion-free *windows* upon the past" (5, my italics). Its title is similarly saturated by words referential to glass and its diverse effects: both "prism" and "refraction" signal many layers and numerous possible views of the same object, emphasising not their

collection into a whole unified account but their dispersion into many different ones. The previously mentioned Chapter 100 of *Oscar and Lucinda* titled “Glass Cuts” constitutes a novelistic example of providing alternative perspectives on the same object, the glass church inspired by the Crystal Palace. The aesthetic and spiritual qualities of glass highly praised by Lucinda⁵⁹ and Oscar⁶⁰ get evaluated differently at the receiving end⁶¹ and remain entirely unnoticed by the indigenous population of Australia that is supposed to enjoy it. Instead, they reflect on the materiality of the object from a practical point of view:

You know what they saw? It was glass. Up until that time they had not seen glass. There was glass windows down in Kempsey and Port Macquarie, but these fellows had not been to those places. They saw the glass was sharp. This was the first thing they noticed – that it cuts. Cuts trees. Cuts the skin of the tribes (Carey 1997b: 397).

One of the tribe members cuts himself with glass and dies of the injuries not much later. As a result, the pieces of glass that have originally been intended to construct a space for the religious communion with the whites’ god, get accorded a rather different fate: “That glass was kept a long time by the elders of the Kumbaingiri, but it was not kept with the sacred things. It was kept somewhere else, where it would not be found” (398). Such a complexity of stories illustrates the possibilities entailed by the title analysed above and also resonates with “refraction” in Onega and Gutleben’s edition, *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary British Literature and Film* (2004), where the term is defined as follows: “We have applied the visual metaphor to literature and film in order to designate a double process involving the ways in which a text exploits and integrates both the reflections of a previous text *and* the new light shed on the original work by its rewriting” (7). Hence we can say that contemporary cultural studies concentrating on the post-Victorian phenomenon defines the dissection of cultural material as a crucial methodological tenet, whereby both historical

⁵⁹ “[t]he Crystal Palace, that building she admired more than any other, was nothing but a fancy of a kind, and there were ideas like this, the philosophical equivalent of great cathedrals of steel and glass, which were her passion” (Carey 1997b: 219-220).

⁶⁰ “He understood that it was the gross material most nearly like the soul, or spirit (or how he would wish the soul or spirit to be), that it was free of imperfection, of dust, rust, that it was an avenue for glory” (Carey 1997b: 317).

⁶¹ “a miracle, a spider web, a broken thing, a tragedy, a dream like something constructed for George III and then assaulted in a fit of rage” (Carey 1997b: 420).

and present narratives are reviewed thus enriching Victorian as well as post-Victorian studies.

Another important narrative when constructing national and cultural identities in the nineties is the one voicing fears of reverse colonisation and cultural imperialism triggered by changes in imperial power structures. The United States constitutes the main object of anxiety, fictionalisations of British relations to which range from that of complicity, through mild rivalry to complete enmity. In the Scottish Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992), Britain and the US feature as two players in the same league, that is, co-colonisers who literally travel in the same boat to Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century to explore opportunities for profit-making. This co-operation is, however, to be understood hierarchically where Britain has the priority in the colonisation process and the US is perceived as an emerging coloniser, which, as the American character prophesies, will before the end of the twentieth century dominate what Britain left free of the planet (Gray 2002: 140). Accordingly, the arrogance constructed as an English national character trait, "English folk who [...] stared about as if superior" (112), is appropriated and extended as an ideology of colonisation that the two nations mutually share:

Because the Anglo-Saxon race [...] have begun to control the world, and we are the cleverest and kindest and most adventurous and most truly Christian and hardest working and most free and democratic people who have ever existed. We should not feel proud of our superior virtues. God arranged it by giving us bigger brains than anyone else, so we find it easier to control our evil animal instincts. This means that compared with the Chinese, Hindoos, Negroes and Amerindians – yes, even compared with Latins and Semites – we are like teachers in a playground of children who do not want to know that the school exists (139).

The concluding remark of this racist argument "God has sent the Anglo-Saxon race to purify the globe with fire and sword" (142) does not only make the colonisation process into a missionary myth but also seems to ridicule theories used for justifying the expansion of Nazi Germany. In other post-Victorian novels like in Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000) such comments are produced by a dubious scientist figure who joins an

expedition in order to prove his theories of Anglo-Saxon superiority: “Weaker nations (e.g. black, Indian, Oriental, Norman etc. etc.) will be swept away. New era will begin” (205) and ends up being an object of mockery himself.

A special feature in Gray’s text is that the complicity of partaking in the colonising process also constitutes a shared responsibility within Britain. Instead of the usual overwriting of the English national narrative by a Scottish counter-discourse, in this novel Scotland’s role in imperialism is openly acknowledged. The country, especially its capital Glasgow, shares the coloniser role of England as the enumeration of Scottish contributors to the theory and practice of industrial revolution,⁶² such as Adam Smith and James Watt, proves. Considering that according to one of the Victorian characters “[t]he British Empire [...] was invented in Glasgow” (Gray 2002: 95), which is “[t]he centre of intelligence of England” (96), one can easily see the implied interest of the eighties and nineties’ cultural policymakers in wanting to associate with this city. Glasgow was declared the official cultural capital of Europe in 1990 and the reconstruction planning for the Victorian memento of The Kibble Palace of Glasgow started in the same year. This glass construction, housing the Botanic Gardens since 1873, was inspired by the Crystal Palace and renewed from the Heritage Lottery Fund after the millennium. Therefore it is not surprising that Scotland participated in the nineties’ official promotion of the nineteenth-century image of the British Empire as national heritage. Providing yet another proof for what Samuel claims that “[l]iterature is often much more sensitive to the undercurrents of national life, even state-formation, than high politics” (1999: 33), the novel’s most progressive narrator, Bella/Victoria even entertains ideas of a more long-term future of changing power structures: “The British empire has grown rapidly, but in another two or three centuries the half naked descendants of Disraeli and Gladstone may be diving off a broken pier of London Bridge, retrieving coins flung into the Thames by Tibetan tourists who find the sight amusing” (Gray 2002: 160-1). Even if throughout the text frictions

⁶² Apart from this brief detour describing Scotland’s peculiar role in British imperialism, namely that it was a colonised country with major contributions to colonising the world in the nineteenth century, the relationship between the industrial revolution and colonisation is not explored in detail here. Neither are the industrial novel and its repercussions in post-Victorian fiction, although I mention their importance in connection with almost every novel discussed in this section from *Waterland* and *Oscar and Lucinda* to *Ever After* and *Nice Work*, the last of which actually rewrites the subgenre. However, the focus of this dissertation is rather on the effects of colonisation and reverse colonisation on identity narratives, wherein aspects of the industrial revolution get a mention but are not foregrounded.

between Scotland and England as well as England and the US are thematised, all three nations experience a stronger bond by their venture to possess the world.

Relations with the US seem more ambivalent in post-Victorian novels with parallel plotlines of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, where the country figures both as a desirable place of escape and as a threat. In Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992), where the US is imagined as an earthly paradise, a tabula rasa which may be conquered and enjoyed by the English by just following the route set by The Great Western Railway and the Brunel-bridge (201-2), the achievements of the industrial revolution summon the function of leading the way out of the country, to a "new world." Still, the hero of the Victorian plotline, Matthew Pearce never gets there because his ship sinks on the way (so much about the great achievements of the industrial revolution), and in the twentieth-century line of events, two of the protagonist's relatives die as members of the allied forces in a war (so much about the US as a peaceful earthly paradise). What emerges here is an idealised image of the US, yet the fact that characters never reach their "new-found-land" may more realistically underline that such conceptualisations of the "other" are only fiction. From this desired destination, the products of the twentieth-century "industrial revolution" invade the local space of the English narrator, Bill Unwin who comments on this turn of imperial trafficking through the actions of his American step-father, Sam: "He was sowing (also) the seeds of his little empire – spreading the bright, new gospel of polymers. I still have the vision of him offering his New World marvels to a depressed and war-wrecked England" (60). Apparently, the process also works the other way round though not without a pinch of irony: "Thus he partook of that post-war spirit of inverse colonialism which beguiled and affronted the exhausted folk of the old world – yet, which, in Sam's case, was to be reversed again, to melt in that grotesque dream of actual assimilation, actual assumption into the true, old world" (62).

As David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) did in the eighties, A. S. Byatt's *Possession* also envisions the States as a materialistic, financially affluent, flashy place, where, in opposition to Britain, academia functions smoothly. Whereas the former campus novel encourages teachers to leave boring, demoralising and full-of-cuts English universities for the US ones, which are imagined as places of hope, money and jobs (Lodge 1989: 50, 327, 371), but which, similarly to *Ever After*, characters never reach, the latter text pictures US

academics as an open threat to English literature, culture and tradition. Trying to protect the manuscripts of their two Victorian poets, the English academics in *Possession* voice their fears of the overseas colonising power as follows: “You’d better keep this absolutely hush-hush, you understand, or it’ll all be winging its way across the Atlantic, whilst the London Library replaces its carpets and installs a coffee machine [...] Patriotism will have to do instead of funding.” (Byatt 2002: 35) This is backed up by the national pride of Sir Bailey, who owns the manuscript: “I don’t like English things being bought up by foreigners” (347) and “English things should stay in England in my view” (348). Even the television interviewer, who has the task to frame a discussion between two experts on the two rediscovered Victorian poets, develops a dislike towards the American professor, Mortimer Cropper, “because he represented capitalist and cultural imperialism” (431).⁶³ Before the television show, this journalist needs to get a crash-course on these poets whom, though she had an English literature course, she has never heard about, because her course was on American literature and postcolonial English. In the discussion of the best known English Victorian poets, this background seems to imply some irony regarding canonisation let alone fears of reverse cultural imperialism. In the interview, the other American professor, countering the above-mentioned stereotype, seems to act as a peacemaker between the two countries, by suggesting that “The days of cultural imperialism are over, I am glad to say....” (436); yet, if this was an affirmative, there would be no need for the three dots leaving the statement open. John Tomlinson argues that today’s cultural imperialism is by no means comparable with that of the nineteenth century. While in the past it was mostly informed by cultural confidence, today it summons more a lack of moral legitimacy and cultural indirection, that is, it reads as a process of loss (1991: 174-175), as the above novelistic references also show.

To sum up, it seems, that the same way “England” was envisioned till the eighties as a dream, an imagined country, an idealised home or a romantic concept of nature, with its people simultaneously exploiting their colonies, post-Victorian novels of the nineties constitute the “US” as a safe haven of escape and a fearful “other” posing a threat to the English. Thus there appears to be a dubious strategic repetition of earlier literary practices

⁶³ Marinovich-Resch even mentions the English weather defeating Cropper in the graveyard in the form of an apocalyptic storm (2003: 67), which further parodies the British-American antagonism by adding the dichotomy of natural vs. material forces.

by the English appropriating the position of their colonised, thus reconfiguring the coloniser-colonised discourse, hence the construction of identities in the nineties maintains the colonial and imperial narrative framework of the eighties. This framework is usually labelled as escapist and nostalgic, both used in a negative sense and rejected as useful characteristics of further investigation. For future readings of such fiction, however, it may be useful to consider a contrary opinion to this. In his *Ethics and nostalgia in the contemporary novel* (2005), John Su reinterprets nostalgia as a constructive critical tool.⁶⁴ He argues that the main reason for devaluing nostalgia is to be sought in its perception as a static notion. Reading it as a dynamic, historical concept that is equally subject to change, it may constitute a critical tool examining responses to different crises. This way nostalgia becomes a symptom of aspects of social dissatisfaction and assumes an ethical dimension: “the ethical value of nostalgia resides in its potential to open up epistemological investigations foreclosed by dominant cultural narratives” (Sue 2005: 87).

After the repetition of the cultural rhetoric of the eighties characterising the nineties and the millennium, at present a certain liberalisation of cultural narratives can be observed. Contemporary critics of post-Victorian texts tend to consciously embrace multiple perspectives of reading as well as interdisciplinary survey techniques when exploring identity discourses. One such tendency seems to be the use of various cultural objects as interpretive tools and their juxtaposition with narratives of individual and collective cultural memory. For example, photography can yield such a productive memory object through which remembrances are visualised and refracted. Gail Jones’s *Sixty Lights* (2004) rewrites nineteenth-century imperial identity into a multicultural one based on the travels of an imperial subject. Aiding this process is the heroine’s visual imagination, which proximates traumatic moments into photographic images in Lucy Strange’s mid-nineteenth-century biography framed in sixty (mental) snapshots in three different countries, Australia, England and India. Having lived in all three locations, she searches for a narrative of identification that synthesises all experiences: “Lucy now found her own culture a shock. After eight weeks in England she was still thinking of India and feeling misplaced and dislocated” (184). Therefore, watching a propaganda film about how the British empire put down the Indian Mutiny does not awake the reaction her compatriots

⁶⁴ The critic’s application of this concept is introduced in the analysis of Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the next chapter.

expect of her: “‘I am disgusted,’ said Lucy loudly, ‘by National Spirit’” (185). Rejecting the binaries her surroundings perceives national and cultural characteristics in, she finally visualises her identity as a tripod when thinking about her journey back to England: “Australia, England and India all held her – upheld her – on a platform of vision, seeking her own focus. These were the zones of her eye, the conditions of her salutary estrangement” (212). These sentences already account for the attitude of the photographer that she has become, zooming in at certain perspectives of vision and always remaining a constructive outsider. This attitude becomes desirable by another rebellious youth, Lucy’s companion Jacob Webb, who expresses a strong wish to be strange (note how by emphasising this characteristic the heroine’s surname receives an explanation), that is, foreign enough to have a good basis of comparison for perceiving things (214-215).

However, photographic images will not do the memory work on their own, so they are aided by the mediation of the reading experience of Victorian novels. Honoria Brady, Lucy’s mother shares the story of *Jane Eyre* like an honourable secret with everyone dear to her, which Lucy in her turn hands down to some of her companions, after having found a copy of the novel with underlined passages among the objects she inherited and remembering her by this memento. Imparting these aspects of the Brontë novel are always connected to important life-events whose detailed account is usually missing from Victorian fiction, such as sexual intercourse or the deaths of husbands, and children at childbirth: Honoria tells her future husband about Jane and Rochester’s harmonious relationship on an important date before their marriage; then she relates the whole plot of *Jane Eyre* to her housekeeper, Molly Minchin who has just been widowed; and Lucy reads from the “sentimental novel” *Jane Eyre* to Violet after her friend loses her child. As Kate Mitchell points out, Lucy’s brother, Thomas finally faces the loss of his sister and is capable of experiencing his grief by rereading *Great Expectations*, the novel they have read together in their childhood (2008: 98).

Apart from facing death and resuscitating personal and collective memories of the past, Dickens’s text assumes additional functions in Lloyd Jones’s *Mister Pip* (2006). On the one hand, it illustrates how the inheritance of Victorian imperial practices causes warfare among islands of the Pacific at the end of the twentieth century, proving that the discourse of imperialism is still sustained; on the other hand, as Jennifer Gribble maintains, the novel

also provides a narrative of empowerment by the way Jones's protagonist, Mathilda uses it for the creation of her own identity: "She is able to place her story of emergence within a wider history of exploitation, genocide and slavery. She discovers that stories are subject to interpretation, bearers of ideology" (2008: 190-191). Only after her visit to Mr Watts's first wife in Australia does she acquire a more complex picture of her previous teacher, and her perception of Dickens changes as well based on her readings when she learns that despite writing so emotionally about orphans, Dickens repeatedly turned his children out of his house. Finally, instead of writing her dissertation on the Victorian author, she embarks on the narrative of her own life (191).

As we can see from the above analyses, post-Victorian novels like Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*,⁶⁵ Jones's *Sixty Lights* and Jones's *Mister Pip* activate various memory objects of architecture, photography and fiction that yield a range of possible readings. One group of such interpretations offers narratives of ongoing attempts to define and promote national and cultural identities largely dependent on political ideologies, be that Tory or Labour rhetoric (*Oscar and Lucinda*), the imperial practices on colonies (*Sixty Lights*) or the inheritance and application of these practices by the ex-colonies for gaining local territories (*Mister Pip*). While acknowledging this understanding, the other, more recent group of critical analyses focuses more on individual and collective cultural memories that the outcast protagonists of these novels activate. What seems a common feature of these characters is that they travel between England and its various (ex)-colonies, experience a number of cultural influences and are at pains to integrate those to form their own identities. The male protagonist in *Oscar and Lucinda* fails in this journey as he sinks with his glass church, while the female protagonist makes her way into the labour movement. Lucy in *Sixty Lights* dies of consumption, yet her vision and photographs survive her and have the force to influence the thinking of those who live on. Mathilda's narrative in *Mister Pip* seems a success story; she is able to emerge as a richer person eventually finding her own voice. All three texts seem to point towards an urge to form new identities, which are complex, individual, multiple and relational.

⁶⁵ The other Booker-winning novel, *Possession* also employs such memory objects like the manuscripts and correspondence of two Victorian authors and the brooch that provides the proof of family lineage between the twentieth-century researcher, Maud and her nineteenth-century research subject, Christabel La Motte.

This relational nature of identity is advanced by Carine M. Mardorossian in her *Reclaiming Difference: Caribbean Women Rewrite Postcolonialism* (2005).⁶⁶ The critic challenges categorical definitions of identity by adding a third phase to the perceived history of postcolonial literature: the sixties' anticolonial national narratives were followed by texts of delegitimation exposing the concept of the nation as a Western construction, and at present, as she suggests, rewritings engage in transforming identity from a fixed root into a fluid and multiple category. The reason for the necessity of such a transformation is that differences of all kind have by now become a marketable category, so they are used for purposes of appropriation and commodification, thus heterogeneity becomes a narrative that supports the dominant ideology or subject. Therefore, instead of static categories depicting difference, she suggests dynamic ones underlining relations, thus the "other" becomes something to which one is not opposed but related, and difference is not a concept but a process. She claims that readings conscious of these transformations can be produced by activating contemporary relational paradigms, focussing on the global interconnectedness in the mappings of identity instead of fixed variables such as gender, race or cultural difference. In this context the term "relation" seems an adequate replacement of the term "identity." This change creates a new theoretical framework of transgenerational, transracial, translinguistic and translocal analytical territory with the help of which the postcolonial approach itself can be reinterpreted as well. (2005: 1-9). Indeed, as the above analyses demonstrate, the protagonists of the discussed post-Victorian novels exist in relation to various national and cultural narratives and use the memory objects to explore and express these relations. Similarly, the reading of these fictional texts together with other cultural narratives makes a critic undergo the same integrative process. This relationality theory proves a productive tool for reading accounts of displaced characters in post-Victorian fiction and my interpretations of such figures in the *Jane Eyre*-adaptations of Chapter 3 and in items of island fiction of Chapter 4 aligns with this view.

Narratives of identity feature in a prominent place in the perception of the (Man) Booker Prize as well. From the postcolonial perspective the prize represents the history of colonisation and decolonisation (Shaffer 2006: 15-30), with a postimperial focus it has evolved from symbolising the nation into an icon of the multiple identities of culture

⁶⁶ As the context is Caribbean fiction, the application of the author's theoretical tenets will be revisited in the case study of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the third chapter and *Cambridge* in the fourth chapter.

(Strongman 221-237). Regarding the marketing aspects of selling literature “[i]t drives publishers mad with hope, booksellers mad with greed, judges mad with power, winners mad with pride, and losers (the unsuccessful short-listees plus every other novelist in the country) mad with envy and disappointment” (Barnes “Diary” 1987) and considering it from the point of view of the self-made literary outcast “the only sensible attitude to the Booker is to treat it as posh bingo” (Barnes “Diary” 1987). The intersection between post-Victorian fiction and the Man Booker Prize appears to be their mutual concern with narratives of identity, so it is worth providing a brief outline of how post-Victorian novels can be characterised through this overlap. The eighties and the nineties, which were the time when the British seriously started redefining their identity, are also considered peak periods in the production of post-Victorian novels two of which were awarded the Booker Prize. As their above analyses prove, the two texts, *Oscar and Lucinda* and *Possession* both strongly engage in negotiating postcolonial, postimperial and individual identities by juxtaposing various nineteenth-century texts and memory objects with twentieth-century attempts at identity-formation. The novels have triggered an enormous and ongoing critical interest, at the same time as generating a boom in the market increasing sales figures and prompting film adaptations largely as a consequence of receiving the literary award which has thus fed into a permanent reflection on the evolving discourses of identity.

As identity-shaping and reflecting devices both post-Victorian fiction and the Man Booker Prize encounter an inherent ambivalence concerning problems of location and inclusion. As the discourse of the centre and periphery between the coloniser and the colonised fades away in the name of literary globalism, the Man Booker Prize is still based in and handed out from London (Strongman 2002: xi) and the language of fiction is that of the dominant culture, English. Also, despite the fact that it also produces literature in English, the US is not allowed to enter the competition, so American fiction still looms about against which the British has to define itself (Todd 1996: 77-83), not to mention that the more experimental local fiction is just as out of the prize’s scope as American writing (Easthope 1999: 203-204). Similarly, in both prize-winning novels, *Oscar and Lucinda* and *Possession*, the English are conscious of their “other” and employ the strategies of self-battering and self-protection, respectively, to define themselves in the new context, yet holding on to the narrative lead, they do not allow these “others” much space for self-expression. Regarded through the lens of the perceptions of the literary award, these two

post-Victorian classics seem to indicate the following ambivalence: the controversial revival of Victorianism serving the redefinition of national, cultural and individual identities produces new self-definitions by keeping the traditional ethos of the English novel⁶⁷ alive.

Such complexities can also be observed in the case of the identities of authors of post-Victorian fiction. Many of the writers who address postcolonial issues in their texts, themselves have a postcolonial identity, such as the Australian Gail Jones and Peter Carey, or Lloyd Jones who comes from New Zealand. Others with a postimperial identity write back to the English from within the UK, as does the Scottish Alasdair Gray and the English-born Welsh Jasper Fforde. Interestingly, the authors whose novels feature the fear of reverse colonisation effected by the US analysed in this chapter, such as David Lodge or A.S. Byatt, are English and have a traditional educational background graduating from the best universities in London, Cambridge and Oxford. And then there are those authors whose origin or identity is multifarious influencing the range of topics they address in their writing. A common characteristic of these writers seems to be the fact that they have travelled extensively, like the Welsh-Dominican Jean Rhys who lived in various places from the Caribbean to Europe, Matthew Kneale who was educated in England but worked in Japan and at present resides in Rome, or the Dutch-born Michel Faber who grew up in Australia and now writes in Scotland. Without drawing far-fetched conclusions from these data, I think it is important to note that the rewriting of the Victorian era with a particular focus on identity-formation seems especially appealing to authors of marginal, uncertain or multifaceted identities.⁶⁸

In the first decade of the twenty first century, there still appears to be a balance kept between England-based and external authors in the Man Booker prize distribution and the plots of the winning novels mostly oscillate between postimperial and postcolonial settings. Post-Victorian texts conceptualising legacies of the empire got as far as the shortlist. The English Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* debunks the English colonial mission to

⁶⁷ Bényei provides an extensive analysis of the ethos of the English novel from 1945 until the 1980s in his *Az ártatlan ország. Az angol regény 1945 után* [The Innocent Country: The English Novel after 1945] (2003a: 40-63).

⁶⁸ Except for Jean Rhys and Gail Jones, the biographies of the enlisted authors can be found at <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/>

Tasmania as disorganised, opportunistic and corrupt, becoming instantly dangerous and hilariously grotesque as soon as powers are reversed and the passengers themselves become the exhibited objects to the natives, marking the emergence of a freshly humorous tone after the gloomy accounts of the previous two decades. As already analysed in this subchapter, the Australian Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* reveals new sensibilities in constructing multiple identities from the point of view of the self, of the nation and of culture. This is achieved by utilising time correspondences between the nineteenth-century and the present, (post)colonial and postimperial spaces of travel and a literary object that assumes the function of an agent of cultural discourse. As spelled out in Chapter 4.1, the recent focus in post-Victorian fiction seems to have shifted to a more individual authoring of selves. Literary biographies offering alternative perceptions of nineteenth-century authors paying special attention to authorship and authorial legacies regularly acquire a place on the long and shortlists for the Man Booker Prize. *Mister Pip* and Gaynor Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress* prolong the list of Dickensiana, Julian Barnes's *Arthur and George* (2005)⁶⁹ fictionalises Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's career, while Colm Toibin's *The Master* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, which eventually won the Prize in 2004, elaborate on the life and writing of Henry James.⁷⁰ The fact that since Hollinghurst's text, the post-Victorian status of which is also debatable, no novel belonging to the category of post-Victorian fiction has won the prize may provide a good chance for the manifestation of subversive voices in this genre and possibly lead to its diversification as well.

⁶⁹ I am grateful to Ákos I. Farkas for calling my attention to this novel.

⁷⁰ For a more detailed study of post-Victorian literary biographies with a special section on biofiction devoted to Henry James see Chapter 4.

Chapter 3. *Jane Eyre* Tailor-Made: A Case Study of the *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Charlotte*-Adaptive Chain of Novels and Other Adaptations

“The experience of employing a plot, even though it was the invention of some other writer, had liberated her imagination; and, from that time forward, all her novels were her own work.”

Peter Ackroyd, *Chatterton* (1987)

The fact that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) has ever since its publication maintained the status of a cult text in the English literary canon is not only proved by its continuous republication, the ongoing critical interest and the filmic interpretations it has generated, but also by the large number of novelistic adaptations born from this text. In this chapter I devote close attention to two of these rewritings, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and D.M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000). In terms of post-Victorian fiction, *Wide Sargasso Sea* counts as the first canonised revision of the Victorian novel usually read in the critical framework of the eighties as a significant feminist and postcolonial asset to the literary canon. Due to its long creation process it adheres to both the modernist and the postmodernist literary conventions, employed in depicting a solely nineteenth-century plot mostly functioning as a prequel to the original text, *Jane Eyre*. *Charlotte* also appears a particularly relevant work in several respects. Firstly, it provides a creative and critical context for the nineties, anticipating changes in the twenty-first-century production and reception of post-Victorian fiction. Secondly, through its double plot and references to both earlier novels, it constitutes a revision sequel to *Jane Eyre* as well as to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, thus creating an adaptive chain of literary texts and assuming a synthetic function across three centuries. In the following, I closely read the two adapted texts, in particular the newest and least well known one, *Charlotte* together with critical analyses of all three works. Since *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* have received ample scholarly attention, the employed critical material here does not include related classics of literary criticism, it rather consists of recent analyses that mark possibly new directions of thought and have not (yet) been canonised. Moreover, I also read post-Victorian novelistic revisions of *Jane Eyre* as items of literary criticism, not only because they critically engage with their

Victorian source text, but also because their revelations often precede those of scholarly works.

I begin the subsequent comparison by examining circumstances and anxieties of authorship, looking at how reception has unintentionally or purposely blurred the notions of author, narrator, character and the reader functions in and of the three novels. The investigation involves the survey of the respective literary scenes, for which I utilise the framework of celebrity culture and its effects on the market analysed in Chapter 2.1, outlining how the self- and critical perception of authors have changed in the last two centuries. After that, I analyse various narratives of identification in the three texts, including self-, national- and cultural identities on the basis of their theorisation in Chapter 2.2. My critical perspective for tracing aspects of identification, such as female *Bildung* and trauma, sexuality, slavery and the concept of home, integrates feminist, postcolonial and postimperial discourses. In addition to applying critical material, I closely read the two twentieth-century adaptations in terms of their characters' relationship to place and cultural objects. Finally, I scrutinise the endings of the three texts to see what they say about the previous two aspects of comparison as well as the directions further adaptations take. The chapter closes with mapping out both the current types of refashionings of *Jane Eyre* and motifs appropriated by other adaptations. This last section hopefully remedies the methodological constraint raised by Hutcheon, namely that the application of the case-study model comparing texts necessarily prioritises an original or a source text (2006: xiii). As its focal point is historical change in adaptive trends, my analysis is conducted chronologically, therefore its starting point is a source text. Yet, the factors that firstly, rewriting happens on a large scale not only concerning plots but also topoi, secondly, variations of the original novel materialise on many levels often including more than one source text and thirdly, readers cannot necessarily reconstruct the initial order of the publication of the texts in question, all aim to complement for the possible shortcomings of conducting a case study.

3.1 “Reader, I married him” –Author (Narrator), Reader, Criticism and the Market

Charlotte Brontë's critical evaluation has changed from that of a minor popular novelist not present in the *Great Tradition* to that of a major canonical figure of Victorian fiction

(Langland 2005: 395). In her *The Brontë Myth* (2002) Lucasta Miller traces the author's reception history as a cult figure from the nineteenth century to the present. The critic claims that Elisabeth Gaskell's famous biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) established Brontë as a victimised Victorian woman perfected by human suffering, which changed into her modernist perception of a sexually frustrated thus masochistic and neurotic Victorian spinster, to branch off into various postmodern conceptualisations of her ranging from one extreme to the other: she is both idealised as an icon of artistic creativity and female courage and demythologised and further pathologised as an aggressive author corrupting real life portraits in a wicked manner.⁷¹ Miller also underlines how consciously Charlotte Brontë aimed at becoming popular (2002: 19) and speculates on the Victorian author's role in creating her own cult figure (40). She considers Brontë a chameleon character as far as the author's relations to the literary scene are concerned, providing a contradictory example of her communications about *Jane Eyre*: to G.H. Lewes she presented the pleasing of the market as her major aim, whereas to Gaskell she communicated that she would never write for money (44). The critic's assumption of these two points of view as opposites seems to rest on some kind of moral preconception romanticising the authorial genius the acclaim of which necessarily lacks financial compensation. However, in the case of contemporary writers like J. K. Rowling or Jasper Fforde the satisfaction of readerly desires is accompanied by earning a high income, not to mention that, as described in the previous chapter, the market has become a complex web of relationships entailing more aspects than just representing the audience's affective recognition. It seems then that both authorship and the market require theorisation anew if utilised for interpretive purposes in order to adjust to their changing meaning in today's literary and cultural context.

Subtitled *An Autobiography*, in *Jane Eyre* Brontë's authorial persona has always been closely associated with her first person-character-narrator: "Jane is Charlotte Brontë speaking of the mesmerising experience of writing *Jane Eyre*" (Oates 2006: 198). Examined through various theoretical approaches, critics follow how Jane slowly acquires authority through her narrative, constructing her in this empowerment at all levels of the

⁷¹ These extremes also appear in post-Victorian novelistic reactions to her texts: some like Jones's *Sixty Lights* put them on the pedestal for their romantic qualities, while others like Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* discard them for the same reason.

creative process: as a narrator growing into an author-in-print, as a writer and even as a reader. From an autoethnographic perspective⁷² Jane's ability to distinguish between the space of the story and the discursive space in her narration provides her the "authority to author her own life" (Buzard 2005: 199). Therefore, the novel is read as a process of authentication by the end of which Jane gains "the freedom to speak-in-print" (207). Interpreting the novel from a Marxist-psychoanalytic framework, a similar claim is made. Jane is perceived to be in economic competition with other, more privileged characters for narrative authority, which she wins by converting her dreams of self-authorship into text (Ronald Thomas 2006: 49-54). Both critiques draw attention to the textualisation of authorship, and they not only understand this conventionally as a struggle against social inequalities but, just like Miller, they also connect it to authorial self-perception and self-advertisement. This approach indicates that the examination of authorship related to writers' behaviour on the literary market merits increasing awareness in readings of nineteenth-century texts.

Centring Jane as a reader and writer, recent analyses also survey how readership establishes a connection with the text and how this relationship is encoded in the narrative itself, determining the authority of the narrator, author and text alike. Reading *Jane Eyre* with J. Hillis Miller's deconstructive classic, *The Critic as Host*, Valentine Cunningham identifies women readers in the novel to be parasitical upon the texts of their male host, meaning that Jane and other female characters decipher and thereby exercise their authority on male writing, such as the inscription of Lowood school or the holy script. Due to Rochester's blindness, by the end of the story Jane reads and writes all his texts, so she even takes over authorship and readership from him (1994: 343). Of course, she also submits to male texts, especially the Bible which gets the final word in the novel (356), but all this is put to paper

⁷² Autoethnography engages in devoting a three-dimensional attention to novels. This process entails a metaphorisation of life into culture, of culture into place and of spatialised culture into the textual space of the novel. Employing this reading method the critic, James Buzard aims to prove that through its narrative nineteenth-century fiction manages to give a picture of the insider's exclusion (2005: 12).

in Jane's own writing in Indian ink that provides her identity as a writer,⁷³ thus the ending is left open, she can carry on writing (359), which she does in many of the adaptations of the novel. As Joyce Carol Oates points out, Jane's authority and autonomy (which she reads in parallel to the author's, as quoted above) receive special emphasis if the sentence "Reader, I married him" is read closely. The agent in this account is neither Rochester nor the two of them together but Jane alone (2006: 202). The same utterance can also be read as an emblematic sentence of the collaborative motivation of narrator and reader, showing that reader-experience is troped from within the text (Garrett 1996: 23). Stewart Garrett regards both the reader *in* the novel as well as the reader *of* the novel as an audience, and while Cunningham and Oates survey the growing power of the former, he examines the influence of the latter. The critic's argument is based on Walter J. Ong's observation that since the nineteenth century was still a transition phase from oral to print culture, such a direct address of the audience could signal the nervousness of the author about the role of the reader warning the narratees that they are not listeners but individual, invisible readers. Accordingly, Garrett analyses *Jane Eyre* as a novel where reading is a topos, underlining the importance of including the reader as character with the accorded role to assist in constructing the text (14).

This reader-function becomes more explicit in some later adaptations. For example, in Clare Boylan's *Emma Brown* the reader invocation is used as a call for collaborative authorship. At the end of the novel *Emma*, the protagonist and her young companion visit a grave which Emma claims to be that of the man of her destiny. However, the secret is never unveiled, instead the text finishes with the following number of questions waiting to be answered: "What epithet is etched into that timeless granite? Whose grave do I keep fresh with my tears? I pull back the brambles that in summer will be bright with roses. The clever little creature [her young companion] makes laborious sense of the graven symbols (for I have been teaching her to read) and deciphers the name of my designated mate.

⁷³ Of course, this identity is ambiguous, too, since, as Susan Meyer argues (1996), Jane writes against oppression with the aid of a commodity (the Indian ink) acquired by oppression. Since the figures of the author and the narrator often intersect in the above analysis, Charlotte Brontë's background deserves a brief look as well. Due to her Irish ancestry, the author of *Jane Eyre* also counts as a slightly marginal figure in terms of internal colonisation. The analysis of the possible effects of the Brontë sisters' origin on their writing would add an additional dimension to the postcolonial and postimperial discussion of their work. In his *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (1996: 1-26), Terry Eagleton does this for Emily Brontë, reading the figure of Heathcliff as a fragment of the Irish Famine. I am grateful to Ferenc Takács for calling my attention to this book.

Which name? Reader, you must decide” (2004: 437). The above critical analyses and the novelistic example show how the reader(-function) is gaining increasing importance in contemporary literary criticism. The appearance of the reader in the literary text is not only due to historical reasons, that is, the switch from oral to print culture, but also to the acknowledgement of the crucial role of readership in partaking in the production as well as the reception of fiction. Through its textualisation, the function of the reader clearly emerges in the writing process already, which ensures its continuity from collaborating in creating and deciphering novels to participating in the celebrity culture responsible for the cultic status of authors and their work. This way the reception side of reader contribution to the literary market discussed in the previous chapter is amended by the production side elaborated here, possibly paving the way for readdressing existing conceptualisations of reader functions in critical thought.

The importance of acquiring the reader’s sympathies in the context of the competition of narrative voices for authority, authenticity and autonomy also appears in fictional responses to the nineteenth century already in the early nineties, preceding critical reactions. One such example is Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992), in which the competing attitudes to the Victorian era have already received attention in the first chapter. Chronologically, the character-narration starts with Archibald’s diary from where one version of Bella’s story emerges: she is created as a medical experiment putting a child’s brain into the body of a young woman who has committed suicide. She develops quickly, starts travelling, uses and abuses men both sexually and financially, finds out about her past by her ex-husband, a so-called Mr Blessington identifying her and, finally, becomes a doctor and a promoter of female suffrage. The happy ending of Archibald’s diary giving an account of their marriage, the grounding of a family and career echoes the closing chapter of *Jane Eyre*, emphasised by the remark “Reader, she married me and I have little more to tell” (Gray 2002: 240). Here the function of addressing the reader requiring involvement and sympathy resembles that of the Victorian novel. Bella/Victoria revises this ending, and asks for the reader’s sympathy challenging her/his credulity (again in a very *Jane Eyre*-like fashion): “You, dear reader, have now two accounts to choose between and there can be no doubt which is more probable” (272). She claims that she is a plain woman (just like Jane Eyre), the crack in her head is not because of any kind of medical experiment but because she was hit too heavily by her father for being impertinent and that the reason she got married to

Archibald was that Godwin Baxter (the would-be performer of the experiment, with whom she was in love) did not want her children. This chronologically and historically latter narrative completely shatters the credibility of the first narrator. What complicates the matter further is that these character-narratives are enclosed in the framework of the author's introductory and closing remarks. In the introduction, the author brings the dichotomies of fact and fiction, originality and copyright into play, desperately trying to both prove and disprove the authenticity of the documents on which the novel is supposed to be based. Additionally, he makes value judgements of the ensuing character-narratives, which become even more explicit in his conclusion. His basic argument is that Archie's version is correct and Bella/Victoria is a liar and that he has placed the woman's narrative after the man's to demonstrate this.

Still, even if her narrative is enclosed between the two men's, Bella/Victoria's account appears to overwrite both her husband's comparably boring diary and the author's similarly tedious notes; she successfully demonstrates how she develops an identity by slowly acquiring a voice. The depiction of her development can be paralleled to that of Jane: while Jane has a wiser, retrospective and an inexperienced, younger narrative self catching up, Bella/Victoria has the body of a woman and the brain of a child, the difference of which needs to be evened out –if the male version of her story is trusted– or a split identity, also present in her double name, connected to her sexual identity and marriage (deemed madness by some characters in the text thus relating her to *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha) requiring a cure –if her version is accepted. Whichever version is privileged as plausible, a common trait between the two heroines seems to be their acquisition of a self and a narrative identity through the process of writing. To sum up, the competition for narrative authenticity, autonomy and thus authority appears to settle in Bella/Victoria's favour. Though his text takes up the bulk of the novel, Archibald gets badly dismissed both by his wife and by the author for the reason of lacking the imagination and talent to write well. The author-editor, Alasdair Gray, who comes second after Archibald in independent textual contribution to the novel,⁷⁴ attacks Bella/Victoria's narrative; nevertheless only on content points and

⁷⁴ By independent textual contribution I mean narrative items that are not directly embedded in other narratives. The sum of Bella/Victoria's letters exceed the author-editor's contribution in amount, however most of her correspondence, except for the letter she writes after Archibald's death, is framed by Archibald's narrative, so in this sense it does not feature as an independent contribution.

seems to be rather jealous of her authority as a writer: "I print the letter by the lady who calls herself "Victoria" McCandless as an epilogue to the book. Michael would prefer it as an introduction, but if read before the main text it will prejudice readers against that. If read afterward we easily see it is the letter of a disturbed woman who wants to hide the truth about her start in life. Furthermore, no book needs two introductions and I am writing this one" (xiii). This comment proves Gray's authorial anxiety of the autonomy of one of his characters (having an exceptional talent at story-telling) which can loosely be associated with anxieties concerning one's literary predecessors, an example of which is presented in the following.

In the process of adapting *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys felt a need to legitimise the project and accordingly voiced her concerns about moral issues, the anxiety of authorship and distortions to the original text. In her correspondence she pays homage to and criticises Charlotte Brontë at the same time, conscious of falling prey to similar accusations by her own critics: "I have a very great and deep admiration for the Brontë sisters (Though Charlotte did preachify sometimes). (And all the rest). And often boring perhaps. (Me too!)" (Wyndham-Melly 1984: 271). More than once she expresses her dissatisfaction with the character of Bertha/Antoinette in the Victorian novel whose missing story she then supplies, struggling to separate her own venture from that of Brontë: "I think there are several Antoinettes and Mr Rochesters. Indeed I am sure. Mine is *not* Miss Brontë's, though much suggested by *Jane Eyre*" (263). This statement is followed by a description of differences between the characters in the two texts to prove the distinction. At the same time, Rhys is afraid of distancing herself from the original novel even though she keeps reminding herself of her very good reason to do so: "I realise what I lose by cutting loose from Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester – Only too well. (Indeed *can* I?) Names? Dates? But I believe firmly too that there was more than one Antoinette. [...] How then can *I* of all people, say she was wrong? Or that her Bertha is impossible. *Which she is*. Or to get cheap publicity from her (often) splendid book?" (271). This last remark also summons the questions of plagiarism and creativity and Rhys's concern that she may embark on the dubious project of making her name feeding off someone else's intellectual property that has already become a cultural commodity. Rhys's anxiety of authorship marks that Macfarlane's argument presented in Chapter 1.3, namely that compared to the primacy of writing in Romanticism, rewriting became privileged over writing by the twentieth-century,

may not be a unanimously accepted claim, and even if it were it does not necessarily have a direct impact on writerly behaviour. The author still fears to interfere with the texts of her cultic literary predecessor without being accused of capitalising on Brontë and thus becoming infamous for being the Victorian writer's cheap imitator.

Critical responses to Rhys's text as a novel written out of Chapter Twenty Seven of *Jane Eyre* supplying Bertha's life-story (Sanders 2006: 102) position *Wide Sargasso Sea* straightaway as an adaptation. Considering the ensuing proliferation of refashionings of the Victorian novel from the perspective of various characters' untold stories, it also functions as an important initiator of maintaining this tradition. The adaptation affects the perception of *Jane Eyre* as well, reinforcing its central status in the canon, on the one hand, and triggering a rethinking of its critical reception, on the other. However, as time has shown, *Wide Sargasso Sea* acquired a valid place on its own in the literary canon. This may be due to various factors, for example that Rhys supplied a missing storyline which mostly precedes that of the original text's or that she wrote back from the doubly oppressed position of a woman of the colonies, which constituted the main subject area of the then-forming feminist and postcolonial critical schools. Her authorship is mostly reflected on in this context with a focus on the autobiographical references in her texts, probably incited by the correspondences of her subject position and the employed referential theoretical perspectives of interpretation. Rhys's biography is read as one of fractured identities situated between high modernism and postmodernism, West-Indian and European authorship and that of woman in the age of the closing empire, which all find expression in her texts (Shaffer 2006: 108); the criticism of Caribbean fiction focuses on the author's outsider status in a European context, which is a struggle that features in her heroines' lives as well (Mardorossian 2005: 5). Accordingly, filtered through these data of Rhys's life, *Wide Sargasso Sea* summons analyses that stress its counter-discursive quality, being a narrative of resistance to dominant discourses (Shaffer 2006: 109-110, Sanders 2006: 106). This critical approach to Rhys's texts has by now become canonised; what seems interesting however, is that the figure of the author is acquiring a more emphatic position in the process, which is likely to have resulted from the recentralisation of authorship and the ethical turn in criticism as argued in the previous chapters.

The evolving title of the novel from such working titles as *The Ghost* or *The First Mrs Rochester* to *Wide Sargasso Sea* indicates how the author slowly managed to dissociate herself from her Victorian predecessor. If examined in terms of narrative authority, the title *Jane Eyre* serves as a proof of its presence, while *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a proof of its absence. This is also how critics analyse the difference between the two titles, claiming that the title of the Rhys text could not have been *Antoinette Cosway* (or, for that matter, *The First Mrs Rochester*) because though the heroine narrates the bulk of the text, she is neither in control of her narrative nor of her life as much as Jane is in *Jane Eyre* (Oates 2006: 203). Jane gains her narrative authority by the end of the novel, whereas Antoinette does not; she sees herself as a ghost in the mirror and inflicts her own death (Stoneman 1996: 183-4). Thus, instead of reflecting the privileged perspective of the main character as the Victorian title *Jane Eyre* does, *Wide Sargasso Sea* focuses more on location or space. It is also reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* enhancing modernist readings of the novel concerned with characters' psychological state. Similarly, Shaffer associates the title *Wide Sargasso Sea* with the inner life of characters, especially since the sea is mainly offstage and the islands feature instead, and the seaweed Sargassum is surrounded by a myth of unknowability just like the psyche. The critic deduces that the novel can thus be grouped as a psychological one (2006: 119).

This focus on inner space also materialises in terms of the authorial decision of whether or not to accord a voice to various speakers. Rhys's first important move is that reversing Jane's priority in the competing narratives of the Victorian novel, here the English white middle class woman's perspective is simply omitted by completely denying her a voice and foregrounding narratives of hybrid identities instead. Opposing the straightforwardness of *Jane Eyre*'s one narrator concept, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* there are three narrators. Antoinette, Edward Rochester's first wife gets the most narrative space, as it is her story that Rhys has aimed to correct, while Rochester complementing her story remains an unnamed speaker, since his relationship to the heroine seems to matter more than his identity. Unlike Jane's in *Jane Eyre*, Antoinette's child and adult voices are not harmonised and Rochester does not appear coherent either. This way the immediacy of their experience emerges more strongly. The third narrative instance constitutes a short but curious intermezzo: it begins as a third person account about Grace Poole's job, which grows into a second person address of the servant Leah, to finally become Grace's own first person

musings about her situation and the state of Antoinette, all this in one and a half pages (Rhys 1968: 141-142). Perhaps it is due to its brevity that Grace's narrative has been largely neglected by criticism, and as there is no reader invocation in this novel probably her status is the closest one to a reader's. I think that her function as a (reader-)character-narrator is important since, as the connection between Jane, Antoinette/Bertha and Rochester, she has access to crucial pieces of information which she could keep to herself or use otherwise for manipulative purposes; her position resembles a little that of Nelly Dean's in *Wuthering Heights*. Fictional responses to *Jane Eyre* have realised this and, although there is no novel yet which centres Grace's narrative perspective, she assumes a more pronounced role in *Charlotte* as well as *Adèle*.

Wide Sargasso Sea then emerges both as an adaptation developing from a single response to Brontë's Bertha figure to an independently acknowledged text in the literary canon and as an icon of in-betweenness depicting the dislocation of its author, narrator(s) and literary categorisation. This last issue whether to regard the novel as a modernist or a postmodernist text is worth a brief look, as it may also influence the relevance of various terms used for rewritings of Victorian works. The difficulty of grouping *Wide Sargasso Sea* in a literary historical era emerges from the fact that Rhys started working on her novel quite early; in fact, she finished its first version before 1940, whereas the final product was published in 1966 only. This divides critical opinion whether modernist or postmodernist characteristics dominate in the text (Mardorossian 2005: 73, Shaffer 2006: 106, 112). The dilemma receives a resolution by underlining the work's interim status, claiming that *Wide Sargasso Sea* commemorates the move from the modern towards the postmodern (Shaffer 2006: 106) or that it anticipates postmodern practices (Waugh 1995: 203-4). Rather than engaging in this, both aesthetically and chronologically dubious debate, attempting to distinguish between modernist and postmodernist features and determining the beginning of a literary historical era, I would just like to emphasise that Rhys's novel rewrites the nineteenth century in the spirit of post-Victorian twentieth-century literary and theoretical movements. The strangely ambivalent opinion that, on the one hand, *Wide Sargasso Sea* started the whole tradition of post-Victorian fiction, on the other hand, it still does not serve as a perfect example of this genre since it does not deal with the Victorian tradition but gender and ethnic issues instead (Gutleben 2001: 111) raises the question why the social position of women, colonialism and Englishness would not count as part of the

Victorian tradition, even if the articulation of these features became more pronounced in the framework of postmodern counter-discourses only. I think that the term *post-Victorian* becomes especially relevant in this context, since it could provide a means to bridge concerns of grouping *Wide Sargasso Sea* under different literary periods. As argued earlier, the flexibility of labelling adaptations *post-Victorian* opens the category to include anything springing from and emerging after Victorian conventions the same way McHale defines the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. In the case of the Rhys novel, the best solution is not to try and squeeze it into either modernism or postmodernism, not to call it *neo-* or *retro-Victorian* thereby ignoring its modernist relevancies but to group it a *post-Victorian* novel incorporating Victorian, modern and postmodern correspondences alike.

After this short detour concerning the complexities of categorising *Wide Sargasso Sea*, let us return to the notion of authorship and examine its functioning in the context of the late-twentieth-century adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deane regards nineteenth-century authorship as a site of projection of hopes and anxieties of Victorian society (2003: xi). This statement also seems to apply in the case of the two post-Victorian writers discussed here, underlining their subversive potential although in very different ways. While Rhys could be construed as an early agent of hope, anticipating and promoting social changes to be brought about by feminist and postcolonial thinking, D. M. Thomas appears to embody the anxiety part, being constantly accused of plagiarism, distasteful pornography and abuse of historical events in his writing. Standing on the positive side of the sharp division of critical opinion about the author, his biographer, Bran Nicol outlines the controversial points in Thomas's career. The suspicion of his incorrect use of sources first appeared in connection with his almost Booker Prize-winning *White Hotel* (1981) then provoking a symposium about plagiarism and keeping his readers alert ever since. His pathological approach to sexuality and its vivid, often sadomasochist portrayals in his writing constitutes the other site of critical attack, especially if this erotic strain is juxtaposed with such sensitive historical events as the Holocaust in a contested way (Nicol 2004: 2-4). Thus the authorial anxiety characterising Rhys's attitude to adapting Brontë becomes transferred onto the readers in the case of Thomas: instead of the author, the readers are the ones who are critically engaged in discussions of invention and plagiarism.

In his defence of Thomas, Nicol raises issues that are important in current critical discourse. Refuting the accusation of misusing sources, he on the one hand constructs plagiarism as a legal category rather than a literary one (6), on the other hand argues that postmodern authorship differs from the Romantic one by legitimising the literary ventriloquism Thomas engages in (7-11). To support this latter point of allowing writers to mimic their predecessors, Nicol conducts a survey for appropriate terminology to characterise this way of literary composition arriving at *intertextuality* and *translation* as the two most adequate ones depicting the author's working method and concluding that "authorship is always a matter of masquerade and collaboration" (11). This discussion well illustrates the analysis of the originality debate concerning post-Victorian adaptations in Chapter 1.3, evoking critical reactions related to authorship and plagiarism, at the same time as triggering terminological queries for an accurate denotation of both the process of rewriting and the relationship between source texts and their adaptations. In my view both the questions of plagiarism vs. adaptation and the (mis)representation or corruption of historical events constitute examples of the ethical turn, which seems a determining factor of post-Victorian fiction as argued in the first chapter. In contrast to deconstruction where it was only the textual that mattered, in the case of these two issues it is the premise of an assumed empirical reality that appears to cause the controversies: in the first one a subject, the person of the author fulfils this extra-textual reference (not to mention his reading public) and in the second one some kind of "true" or "real" version of historical events summons this control function.

What emerges from all this is that D. M. Thomas has gained his celebrity status by shocking his audience. Although he wrote twelve novels, scholarly attention has only been devoted to the *White Hotel* (Nicol 2004: 2). While the previously discussed two authors feature in most university syllabi, Thomas's works are largely neglected. Nevertheless, by way of the controversies thriving around his 1981 novel, he seems to have entered the domain of popular culture and, as attacks continue mainly through literary journalism, he has maintained this status. The event of becoming an (in)famous public figure was accompanied by an ironic twist in Thomas's private life: he resigned from a job in the academia to escape becoming a celebrity, which he nevertheless ended up being. Nicol traces how the author's getaway route directly led into follow-up articles, scandals and eventually into television appearances, despite his great fears of becoming a "media

monster” (2). This way the “meet-the-author culture” described in Chapter 2.1 assumes the curious form of detective journalism and moral accusations in the case of Thomas’s career.

As far as *Charlotte* is concerned, Thomas lives up to all the above critical accusations in connection with this novel as well. He plagiarises *Jane Eyre* at the beginning of the text, which is followed by a detailed account of Jane and Rochester’s sexual intercourse with special attention to Jane’s worries about the normal functioning of the male member, and in the remainder of the text various sexual perversities on both plot levels are outlined making specific connections between these and postcolonialism. Unlike in the case of Rhys’s fear of producing a cheap imitation of her Victorian predecessor’s cult text, there are no similar anxieties voiced by Thomas outside the framework of his novel, while questions of originality, copyright and plagiarism emerge as crucial topics within the novelistic text. Out of the two female narrators one appropriates the voice of Jane of *Jane Eyre* but as the novel progresses she diverges from her original, whereas the other speaker, Miranda, who narrates the twentieth-century plotline engages in ghostwriting the Victorian novel *Jane Eyre* and relates the whole process of literary ventriloquising Thomas was accused of earlier. Accordingly, the text has a double plot, a nineteenth-century one continuing the original story of the Brontë novel, narrated by Jane and authored by Miranda, and Miranda’s contemporary narrative in which she, first by mistake then for fun, assumes the name Charlotte Brontë in the West Indies. Male characters have little say in this text; Robert Rochester, Edward’s son and Jane’s later lover in Martinique as well as Miranda’s father only earn narrative space at the end of the novel where their letter and diary, respectively, amend the text.

These different accounts are sometimes contradictory, especially concerning issues of authorship and rewriting, which can be read as a metacommentary on the process of adapting a literary classic, fictionalising what Thomas has experienced in connection with the *White Hotel* and anticipating what criticism he may receive for *Charlotte*. Miranda imparts in her twentieth-century narrative that she faked an alternative ending of *Jane Eyre* in the name of Charlotte Brontë for her father’s sixtieth birthday and created a hoax around how she had acquired the missing manuscript. In her father’s diary this story appears in quite a different light regarding the Victorian writer as the author of the manuscript and the manuscript itself as an authentic piece of writing. He also reports on engaging in a dialogue

with his daughter about how she should proceed with the adaptation: “‘I have a moral problem about the *Jane Eyre*; I need your advice. I’d like to start out from Charlotte’s own alternative ending. If it is hers’ [says Miranda]. ‘It is; and you must. No question’ [replies the father]” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 151). Then they address the copyright problem and decide that it must be outdated as the person eligible for the money has most likely been dead for a while. Finally, they tackle the issue of plagiarism and its relationship to the supposedly existing original manuscript (a dilemma that reappears in the analysis of Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair* in the next chapter as well): “‘But that leaves the problem, if I declare Charlotte’s part-authorship, everyone’s going to think me dotty, and the vultures will come after the manuscript. But if I don’t declare it, it’s a kind of theft.’ ‘An innocent theft. And you’ll change some of it?’ ‘Of course; I want to take up where she left off; but also, naturally, make some changes in what she wrote’ ” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 151). If these exchanges are juxtaposed, what emerges is a playful fraud, discrediting the father as naïve, the daughter as deceptive and, through their dialogue, the concept of the original as implausible or outdated and the whole hassle around copyright and plagiarism as a theatrical farce which no one believes in any more. If one wants to, this can also be read as Thomas’s reply to his critics through his fictional text.

By engaging historical and fictional authors as well as their fictional character(-narrators) in a dialogue, the writer exploits the multiple authorship he constructs, refocusing authorial intention, a concern seemingly legitimate again in today’s academia as already argued in the previous chapter, leading to both fictional and critical reactions to the original (con)text of *Jane Eyre*. For example, Jane’s reflection on the situation of female authorship: “I have observed that such histories as this conclude at the matrimonial altar: and it is because we writers are rightly fearful. In particular, every female writer, I believe, is a girl writing painstakingly, in a silent room, in a bleak, silent house, striving with a sense of desperation to be pleasing to her master” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 20) echoes critical reactions to both Jane’s eventually gained authority in the Victorian novel as one that is located in a male drawing room (Tsomondo 2007: 96) as well as Brontë’s authorial success as one that is due to her succumbing to conventions of male authorship (Sue Thomas 2007: 105). However, both Jane and Brontë’s situation appear a bit more complex than these critics perceive. Jane is not only subordinated to Rochester because she is a woman but also due to her social status, so it is no wonder that she does not have access to the drawing

room: as Nóra Séllei argues, she has a very narrow space to communicate from due to the ambivalence of her status as a governess, which means that she is neither a servant, nor a mistress owning Thornfield Hall (1999: 168-169). In Brontë's case there was a dominant tradition the qualities of which she had to adjust to first if she wanted to get published, for example, by assuming a possibly male identity through taking up the pseudonym Currer Bell, and only then could she start changing the existing tradition once her work had reached the audience.

The beginning of the above quote from *Charlotte* also merits some attention, as the problem of resolving stories at the point of a happy wedding leads to Jane's dissatisfaction with authors of novels with similar endings: "It is well known that in novels – for example, the novels of Miss Austen – the pen falters just at the point where, perhaps, the most interesting narrative begins: *after* the wedding ceremony. With the consequence that not only are the rituals of the marriage-chamber avoided but the ordinary, humdrum details of the start of a married life" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 17), which becomes more emphatic as the narrative progresses and culminates in her attack of her own author: "No novel, whether a virile, rumbustious concoction by Mr Fielding, an urbane social comedy by Miss Austen or – dare I say it? – a gloomy, muffled romance by one of the Miss Brontës, can be more than a feeble echo of what actually occurs to all of us" (37). These comments picture the Victorian writer and her historical predecessors as weak writers in terms of the realistic novel they should have been producing. Though for another reason, a similarly daring twentieth-century reaction is provided to Brontë by Miranda in her lecture, constituting the author as a murderer of her characters: "But Grace had the saving grace of getting drunk now and then; so allowing the 'madwoman in the attic' to escape for a while – allowing Charlotte, more importantly, to slash men, rip up wedding apparel, and set fire to beds!" (120).⁷⁵ Viewed from the perspective of rewriting, D. M. Thomas liberates Jane by allowing her to produce the narrative "*after* the wedding ceremony" that she was missing from most novels, while Brontë's recognition as a romancer and murderer of her characters appears to be confirmed through her fictionalised emplotment of an affair between Jane

⁷⁵ Not only fictional texts produce such critiques of authorial intention, but similar opinions are advanced in Brontë scholarship as well. Patricia Duncker reads *Jane Eyre* and other texts by Brontë in terms of the author revenging herself on men by maiming or killing them, like blinding Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, getting Robert shot by the workers in *Shirley* or sinking M. Paul on his return trip from the West-Indies in *Villette* (Duncker, 2008).

and Robert Rochester but only by killing Edward Rochester before and Jane shortly after the liaison begins. The above observations on authorial intentions tend to conflate the author, the character(-narrator) and sometimes even her double all earning the status of an angry young woman.

Such a purposeful mixture of the notions of author, narrator and character appears in the full title of the novel as well. *Charlotte: The final journey of Jane Eyre* can be interpreted on many levels. Related to authorial power, even without knowing the plotline, the colon can be understood as a separation between author and title, thus it reads as Charlotte Brontë's sequel to her own novel; acquainted with the story, it can be understood as Miranda ventriloquising the Victorian author bringing her novel to an end. On the narrative level it may be read as Brontë narrating the events of the novel she could not include in the Victorian times or Miranda narrating her life as an impersonation of the historical author. As characters both Brontë and Miranda could assume the role of Jane for their autobiographical accounts. Christian Gutleben construes the title in the context of market demands claiming that it may be misleading on purpose. Without an awareness of the plot, the title only provides potential readers with Victorian references, which are further strengthened by the blurb promising a continuation of the Victorian plotline. The critic argues that even the choice of Jane Eyre as a protagonist is suspect of being a commercial move, since Thomas's aims would have been served by any anonymous Victorian figure as well (2001: 182-183). This argument fits in the above paradigm of accusing Thomas with the exploitation of historical material for sensationalist purposes. Even if this is the case, I do not see it as a problem, as increased readership may not just mean financial gain for the author, but also a prevailing interest in canonised texts and their rewriting often enhancing the revisitation of historical narratives and the facilitation of long term social changes.

Similarly to *Jane Eyre*, the reader is also appealed to in *Charlotte*. The nature and function of this plea, however, change as the text progresses. The initial "Reader, I married him" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 7) is lifted straight from the original text and likewise calls for sympathy and inclusion. Later the same address emerges as a warning that readerly expectations might be upset by an anticipated change in the narrative: "Reader, you will expect me to draw a veil over the intimacies which transpire between a man and his wife. I am sorry to disappoint and offend you" (14). This narrative sequence culminates in an outright

contrasting of the Victorian story and its refashioning in progress clarifying the kind of story to follow:

Reader, this is a very different picture of my marriage from that which you were presented with in what I would call my ‘romantic’ version. *Reality*, however, does not often coincide with *romance*. I will remind you: ‘When his firstborn was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were – large, brilliant and black...’ Well, events did not quite happen like that (44, my italics).

The reader-phrase features in the twentieth-century narrative as well, yet its function seems to change in parallel with the altering contents in the process of rewriting. In sentences like “There you have it, dear reader” (109) and “Reader, I told him to piss off” (136) readers assume the role of mere receptors of Miranda’s frustrations whereby the formula, though mimicking some past sense of inclusion, appears void of its original function. The context of the latter remark is that of a marriage offer to Miranda by one of her lovers, which is “outside her scenario” (Sue Thomas 2007: 109), so she refuses by making the whole situation as well as the original affective content of the sentence ridiculous.

The fact that the famous “Reader, I married him” utterance is reinvigorated in D. M. Thomas’s adaptation proves that, in addition to the numerous reactions of critical and readerly dissatisfaction, a disbelief concerning the happy ending of Jane’s marriage gets voiced in the realm of fiction as well. Similarly to the above quote from *Charlotte* indicating the realistic turn Jane’s story is to take (as italicised), other post-Victorian texts also comment on this major problem constituted by the romance-realism dichotomy in the resolution of *Jane Eyre*, mainly in emotional terms. The characters in Gail Jones’s *Sixty Lights*, for example, pass the novel on as a cult text of self-identification from generation to generation and cherish its romantic qualities whereby they are aware of its implausible aspects as well: “In the novel *Jane Eyre* a tree is cleft by lightning. The goddess Nature is so responsive to the movements of lovers that she sends prophesying icons to confirm the progress of their romance. ‘I know it’s preposterous,’ Honoria said. ‘But isn’t it also wonderful?’” (2004: 47). Though acknowledging it, the narrator in Michel Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White* is more critical of *Jane Eyre*: “In terms of sum total of pages

she [Sugar, the novel's heroine] seems to have read almost as much as he [William Rackham, Sugar's lover, master and employer] (although some of it, inevitably, is the sort of piffle written for and by her own sex – novels about timid governesses and so forth)" (2003: 111). When thinking about the fictional plots she constructs aspiring to become a novelist, Sugar explicitly expresses anger with Brontë's romantic solutions of fortune and marriage, protecting her own text of such a mistake: "[o]therwise this novel, conceived as a cry of unappeasable anger, risks becoming one of those 'Reader, I married him' romances she so detests" (246). In sum, in the case of *Sixty Lights* we can see a clear distinction of romance and realism, while in *The Crimson Petal and the White* the romance quality is specifically characterised by the reader invocation analysed above. The affective quality of addressing the reader in *The Crimson Petal and the White* is put into perspective just like in *Charlotte*, but while the invocation is ridiculed in D. M. Thomas's text, in Faber's novel it gets angrily discarded as some kind of superfluous nuance.

3.2 "Who am I?" "Where am I?" "Is this home?" – Narratives of Identity

Self-identity presents itself as a central question retained in all three novels. Its foremost component is the matter of finding one's voice both in the course of growing up and among possible competing narratives. At first sight both of these processes appear to be easily decipherable in the case of *Jane Eyre*. As described in the previous subchapter, Jane's account is usually read as a typical Victorian *Bildungsroman* in which the heroine's child narrative catches up with that of her wiser adult self as she writes herself into an authentic character. On her way she encounters various alternative scripts which she learns to assimilate or discard, and once her status is clarified by her inheritance and marriage she lawfully enters an integrative position of authority. This reading of the novel as a feminist urtext⁷⁶ has by now undergone a series of revision. After the integration of feminist criticism with postcolonial, postimperial, Marxist and psychoanalytical readings, Jane's coherent identity has been further refracted, highlighting its creation at the expense of omitting important sites of identification. This process was strongly inspired by Bertha/Antoinette's fictional account supplied in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which also incited modifications in the critiques of Jane's self-perception topicalising the issues of slavery,

⁷⁶ For a good summary of feminist critical history of *Jane Eyre* see: Kaplan 2007: 23-29.

racism, (re)patriation, economic dependency and madness. In the following, postcolonial and postimperial accents are scrutinised in Jane's identification process to see how the Victorian novel has been reread in these current theoretical frameworks, which enhances a better understanding of its two adaptations as well as the critical frameworks themselves.

In line with Gilbert and Gubar's perception of Bertha as Jane's angry double, Valentine Cunningham reads *Jane Eyre* as a narrative proving that marriage in Britain in the nineteenth century is comparable to being enslaved in the East. In this framework Bertha's Gothic appearances are interpreted as manifestations of post-abolitionist anxieties of the 1840s questioning the empire's self-enrichment at the expense of its colonies, which in the case of the Brontë novel makes both Rochester's house and Jane's fortune suspect since these originate in the West-Indies. (1994: 351-353). Although Jane defines herself against her potential male partners and their stories, missions and texts, she finally submits to marriage and colonial wealth (359) including the Indian ink with which she writes her story. Hence even if in a slightly modified version (she marries a Rochester dependent on her and shares her fortune with her relatives), she accommodates to and bases her adult identity on existing imperial ideologies. Cora Kaplan argues that such ideologies are necessary as a basis for the explanation of differences and inequalities between people and in the British Empire after the abolition of slavery in 1833 political, social and economic discrepancies were explained through racism. Like Cunningham, she identifies *Jane Eyre* as a novel representing this post-abolitionist ideological turn in British culture but with a much stronger emphasis on the complicity of Jane's narrative with creating racist identities: in Brontë's text everything in the plot depends on the empire which, nevertheless, gets a poor press and Jane's narrative functions as a slave-narrative with a slave imagery "conditioned by post-abolitionist racial thinking" (Kaplan 2006: 205-206). Kaplan explains how reading Jane's account as a slave narrative becomes increasingly problematic considering the novel's solution whereby Jane and Rochester retreat into provincial England escaping (from) the legacies of slavery. From this postcolonial perspective projected upon a post-abolitionist period, the critic concludes that today's engagement with *Jane Eyre* can contribute to raising awareness of the metropolis's failure to solve "the Pandora's box of problems let loose after the abolition of slavery" and of the unsuccessful strategy of naïve idealism and escapism that was employed instead (207).

Such an answer of repatriation and restoration in an English landscape to Jane's quest for the right alliance in the right location is also viewed as a definitely negative choice by critics assessing the novel from the (post)imperial perspective of English history and identity, claiming she ends up as a social outcast, her marriage to both country and husband constituting an alienated enjoyment (Parrinder 2006: 202-208). Reading *Jane Eyre* together with Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question*, David Deirdre not only underlines the implicit imperial discourse present in the novel but also concludes that Jane participates in creating an English national identity by acting as an idealist purifier of Rochester's alliance with another race, whom, though maimed and blinded but cleansed, she finally marries (2005: 91-93). In the case of both arguments, the assumption from an imperial perspective would be that Jane's inheritance, marriage and purifier role established her as a fully accepted member of English society and the British Empire, yet she stays an outsider. Such an interpretation would be an interesting challenge to the common perception of the ending of *Jane Eyre*, to be discussed in more detail in the next subchapter, as a romance one. Despite the fact that Jane comes into the possession of the above assets, alliances and roles enabling her integration, she would not be allowed into the social milieu of the Ingrams or into the empire. Consequently, there must be something wrong with both of these environments, which, in turn, makes the ending of the novel into a realistic one.

Still using the framework of national identity but juxtaposed with the self, Jane's narrative appears in a more optimistic light from an autoethnographic point of view wherein it is regarded as an English national tale, "a quest for a positive national identity that will supplement and transcend other identities but not obliterate them, that will sustain the condition of being other than one thing", with Englishness understood as a restricted heterogeneity "that has to turn aside from engagement with forms of otherness deemed unmanageable or threatening to the integrity of the system of differences constituting the national culture" (Buzard 2005: 197). The utopistic nature of the ending also counts as a disturbing factor in this analysis, yet Jane's pilgrim's progress is seen as one leading from a series of antihomes or homelessness to (an idealised) home, from anticulture towards culture in which she can retain both "a protestant, protofeminist individualism and a condition of intersubjective integration" (200). The solution of Jane's narrative quest is perceived in a similarly productive way by Hungarian feminist criticism: "The stories made

up independently of Jane's subjectivity and exclusion are, thus, in a cause-effect relationship and have further implications inasmuch as finding a voice means not only controlling her story and life, but also means that constant exclusion can be replaced by inclusion, by belonging somewhere, to someone" (Séllei 2002: 10). Séllei traces Jane's narrative development from her early childhood and points out that her first authorised attempt at relating her story not only makes her realise how storytelling influences one's future but also how this growth through narrative power enables her to access the secret of her origin (15), which can be read as her first step towards finding her roots and home. It seems then that as soon as national identity is separated from postimperial and postcolonial narratives and paired with self-identity formation, it loses its explicitly negative overtones and focuses the concept of home in more individual terms. Probably, the most fruitful reading of Jane's identification quest emerges from the consideration of current national and cultural discourses as well as accounts of (recuperating) outcasts, similarly to the case of *Oscar and Lucinda*, presented in the previous chapter.

In the text and interpretations of *Wide Sargasso Sea* feminist, postcolonial and postimperial aspects are already combined. As described in Chapter 3.1, in contrast to Jane's, Antoinette's narrative reads as weak and problematic because her childhood and adulthood accounts intertwine and she does not acquire authority before she dies at the end of the story. As Stoneman also observes, the first analyses constituted Antoinette/Bertha as Jane's "other" who is repressed in terms of rationality, sexuality and race in the context of women's liberation from roles of servitude (1996: 6). This interpretive framework has already been criticised above in the case of *Jane Eyre* as far as the understanding of Jane's account as a slave narrative is concerned, and proves similarly controversial for Antoinette's narrative in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as Benita Parry and Chakravorty Spivak's seminal debate on the subject proves. Parry's claim that the historically repressed subject and her knowledge reveal themselves if put into a speaker position is refuted by Spivak pointing out that this position functions as a mediated one, since it is constructed according to Western worldviews, therefore, this way of accessing silenced knowledge remains impossible. Not even Christophine, who could be a plausible colonial subject, receives enough narrative power in the novel, because *Wide Sargasso Sea* is written in the interest of a white Creole in the European tradition rewriting a canonical English text. Thus, Spivak concludes, instead of challenging the ethos of *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* reinforces it

(Stoneman, 1996: 185-186, Mardorossian 2005: 61-64). Laura Ciolkowski refines this argument by pointing out racist and sexual reasons behind the sacrificing of the colonial subject, Antoinette for Jane's feminist individualist career. She claims that the sacrifice of Antoinette as a sexualised "other" is necessitated by the imperial perception of the English as a pure race. In this framework sexually overproductive subjects not fitting into the patriarchal family traditions due to the biological boundaries of Englishness are criminalised, therefore Antoinette/Bertha constitutes an unchaste Creole woman who must be controlled by state legislation as the empire is disinterested in mixing races. Thus *Wide Sargasso Sea* reads as a rewriting of the imperial aspect of *Jane Eyre* in the form of a battle for imperial control (Ciolkowski 1997).

This battle raises a number of issues constituting the contents of Kaplan's "Pandora's box" from people's mental and cultural (mis)conceptions of one another through frustrated ventures of transforming colonial plantations into English patriarchal homes⁷⁷ to post-abolition slave economy threatening the purity of the English race with contamination. Using the relationality paradigm for identity-forming, as introduced in the final part of the previous chapter, Mardorossian considers the reason for characters' failing attempts at identification to be in the lack of stable identity categories. The concept of race becomes undermined because its definition depends on characters' shifting relationship to other categories of identity: the often contradictory classification of these categories is based on the individual perspectives the figures view one another from. Hence Mardorossian's conclusion that *Wide Sargasso Sea* "dramatises the possibility of a mutual and creative 'interculturalisation' between white and black Creoles, hints at ways in which this interaction could have been propitiously sustained, and foregrounds the reasons why it was stopped" (2005: 71). Su arrives at a surprisingly similar conclusion approaching the topic from a very different angle, namely by constituting nostalgia as a constructive tool in aiding to identify persisting political, social and cultural ailments, as introduced in the previous chapter in connection with anxieties of internal and reverse colonisation and the establishment of new postimperial identities. He argues that Antoinette's stubborn nostalgia, longing for her childhood's would-be relationships and circumstances serves as a "means for Rhys to explore and ultimately articulate a vision of community prohibited by

⁷⁷ Said provides a convincing analysis of this by focusing on such a transformation attempt in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994: 80-96)

colonial ideologies of racial difference” (2005: 9). The knowledge thus mediated is that her internalisation of colonial narratives prevents Antoinette from forming certain relationships, such as a genuine friendship with Tia and immerse in certain communities, such as that of the natives (89). These two newer lines of critical inquiry modify the classic postcolonial and postimperial paradigm. Mardorossian does this by dissolving identity, a conventional category of reading in this framework and replacing it by the more diverse category of fluidity; and Su achieves the same by introducing a new interpretive tool, nostalgia, that has so far mostly been used in a conservative context, to be utilised in the discursive space of cultural criticism with a more liberal agenda. These innovations also influence the following close reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* where I examine how Antoinette engages in the process of interculturalisation in various contexts.

Initially, Antoinette tries to accommodate to their new English-Jamaican context: “We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be an English girl but I missed the taste of Christophine’s cooking.” “So I looked away from her [Myra, one of the new servants] at my favourite picture, ‘The Miller’s Daughter’, a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders” (Rhys 1968: 19). The cultural object of the painting, just like Dickens’s *Great Expectations* for Mathilda in *Sixty Lights*, provides a source of identification for Antoinette. After glancing at it, she attempts to place the people surrounding her in the imaginary context of the picture and envisions “Mr Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English” and her mother “so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either” (19). The identity of Antoinette’s mother is described in the binary negative only, so besides narrating what she is not, it also becomes clear what the dominant discourse is against which she appears a non-entity. Later, Antoinette busies herself with idealising England as a place of escape where she can more successfully construct her identity: “I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me... England, rosy pink in the geography book map” (84), which image, based on an even more abstract visual representation than the painting, is countered by Christophine who says it may be “cold to freeze your bones and they thief your money,” she even goes as far as doubting its existence altogether: “‘England,’ said Christophine, who was watching me. ‘You think there is such a place?’” (84).

The ambivalence Homi K. Bhabha depicts in describing the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser (1994: 86) can be extended to the geographically displaced character-narrators' perception of each other's territory, illustrated in Antoinette and Rochester's exchange in trying to understand each other's concept of home:

'Is it true,' she [Antoinette] said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'

'Well,' I [the unnamed Rochester] answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.'

'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?'

'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?'

'More easily,' she said, 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.'

'No, this is unreal and like a dream,' I thought (Rhys 1968: 58).

As a consequence of Rhys's revision of *Jane Eyre*, most of *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s plot takes place in the tropical West-Indies foregrounding a colonised female narrative voice. Antoinette's marriage and sexual explorations take place here in her home and not in the English country house where she is later locked up. Nevertheless, England retains its curiously idealistic role in her narrative. Once they arrive there, the place does not prove her a new source of identification, neither does it assume the role of the safe haven of escape the English countryside setting means for Jane and Rochester in the Victorian text. Though admitting her disappointment, Antoinette still keeps the image of the country void of criticism and simply refuses to recognise the place as "England:"

It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it before somewhere, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it. As I walk along the passages I wish I could see what is behind the cardboard. They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it (144).

As Antoinette cannot find another way but to stick to her dreams, discrepancies between perceived and experienced “England” appear, resulting in an ambiguous image of the country unable to emerge as a stable entity in her narrative, legitimising its perception as a blank space filled by the hearsay and imagination of Jamaican natives who have never been to the place. The same question reappears in Beryl Bainbridge’s *Master Georgie*, a post-Victorian text retelling the Crimean war. When one of the characters, an archaeologist is asked why he lives away from England, he treats the question similarly: “ ‘What is England?’ he retorted. ‘Where is England?’ ” (Bainbridge 1999: 97). From this statement it similarly surfaces that even if “England” exists, its semantic field is uncertain, and if it is treated as a territorial entity, there is no central space against which characters are displaced, thus both the definition and the location of “England” remain open. In V. S. Naipaul’s *Guerrillas* (1975), a postcolonial novel using motifs of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* alike, the guerrilla leader, Jimmy in his dialogue with Roche – the postmodern version of Rochester – denies the country a realistic or practical existence: “ ‘England isn’t real’ [...] ‘The problems aren’t going to be solved there. You know what happens in England. Everybody goes to the demo and the meeting and then they leave you and go home to tea’ (1976: 26).⁷⁸ From a postcolonial perspective England as a home does not assist in framing characters’ national or cultural identity in these texts.

Finally, Antoinette does not survive her stay in England and dies as a social outcast. Considering the generic consequence of her narrative account, if *Jane Eyre* is read as a *Bildungsroman*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* could be read as an anti- or a negative-*Bildungsroman*. In contrast to Jane’s progress Antoinette rather seems to stagnate or even regress according to the generic conventions of the *Bildungsroman*. Also, the Rhys text does not include longer sequences describing the development of any character but concentrates on their identification process as a sequence of repeated attempts changing their behaviour depending on the surrounding forces instead. While in Jane’s identification process in *Jane Eyre* the Gothic elements appear to move her towards gaining narrative authority, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the traumatic scenes Antoinette repeatedly faces, for example her

⁷⁸ Later in *Guerrillas* Roche himself muses on England and arrives at a similarly divergent conclusion: “England, Roche thought: it was so hard to get away from England here [in the Caribbean]. And there were so many Englands: his, Jane’s, Jimmy’s, Lloyd’s and the England – hard to imagine – in that old woman’s head [a local woman]” (Naipaul 1976: 108). As an Englishman he does not deny the country’s existence in any form but acknowledges the possibility of its multiple imaginings.

confrontation with Tia, do not heal or assist her in her recuperation but mark her further disintegration. For instance, in the Victorian text, after Jane has experienced the vision of Bertha in the mirror or has had nightmares, she relates these to Rochester who encourages her to discard them as unnecessary obstacles in her life. Thus capitalising on her ignorance and lack of information on her surroundings, Rochester hinders Jane from further, possibly more complex diversions in her identification process. In Rhys's rewriting, Antoinette is deprived of her mirror once they relocate to England, so she does not get a chance to face her other selves this way. Her renaming by her English husband deprives her of her identity even more: "Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass. There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now [...] Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?" (Rhys 1968: 143-144). Losing England she also loses contact to her own imagined self that she has projected into her new place of residence and due to her circumstances she cannot access her old, Caribbean self either. The event of (re)naming intertwined with (the loss of) identity is very similarly reiterated in another post-Victorian text, Clare Boylan's *Emma Brown*. Just like in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in this text, allegedly based on a Charlotte Brontë fragment, a young woman's entry into marriage also involves her being re-christened by her husband: "I even forfeited my given name, for Albert declined to call me Isabel or Isa. In his household I was Belle. Belle Chalfont! It was a name for a plump, youngish but settled matron. This was not the reflection my mirror threw back at me" (2004: 100). The reverse happens to the protagonist, who is called Mathilda Fitzgibbon by those who surround her. Whenever she comes across a mirror, she keeps asking "Who am I?" in a similarly hopeless, lost and wrecked state as Antoinette does in the Rhys text, however, the outcome appears more constructive, as, slowly leaving her traumatic amnesia behind, she painfully identifies herself as Emma and thus begins to reconstruct and narrate her story as a member of society with a known origin.

Antoinette's thus refracted narrative is usually read in terms of resistance. Su, for example, interprets it as a postcolonial revision of Jane's colonial narrative of linearity, progress and consolation, since it lacks all these qualities. He argues that the linear time of the colonial narrative gets distorted by Antoinette's regretful reiteration of past events and experiences as well as her contrasting the negative present in England with a longing for her past in the

West Indies of her youth which was not undisturbed either. The critic concludes that such an alternative temporality, prioritising past loss over a terrible present, summons an alternative (in this case postcolonial) interpretation of experience as well (2005: 56-64). Also juxtaposing the aspects of development and linearity, Mardorossian claims that, unlike in *Jane Eyre*, due to the often indistinguishable blending of the experiencing child and the older narrating Antoinette, the convention of the nineteenth-century first-person narrative grows disrupted in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Since the child narrator is not subordinated to the adult one, this narrator does not develop a transparent central ideological position based on her acquired knowledge, thus the conflicting narrative representations obliterate the “real” or any possibility of reliability, a basic convention of nineteenth-century narratives (2005: 67-69). These critical associations of narrative inconsistencies and temporality within the respective frameworks of nostalgia and relationality inspire further engagement with the concept of time. Such an engagement appears a fruitful path of future analysis of how the intermingling of the Gothic and the *Bildungsroman* may be determined by trauma and repetition, for example.

The achievement of D. M. Thomas’s *Charlotte* is that, juxtaposing the Victorian novel and its first canonised postcolonial rewriting, it utilises both the narrative of the novel of development of *Jane Eyre* and the negative *Bildungsroman* in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which return in the narrative voices of Jane and Miranda, respectively. In Thomas’s novel, Jane’s first person narrative continues from the first sentence of the last chapter in Charlotte Brontë’s text: “Reader, I married him” (Brontë 1999: 397). Her narrative assumes a less authoritative quality not discarding all disturbing factors in her life but facing and learning from them, though her white middle class imperial bias mostly stays intact. This is the line of story-telling into which Miranda, ghostwriting Jane’s account, seems to channel her more collected self, whereas her other narrative relating her own life emerges as a much more disoriented confession, where her adult experiences intermingle with her childhood traumas. The connection between the two accounts becomes clear the first time when the storyline of Jane’s life is followed by Miranda’s where she takes responsibility for ghostwriting Brontë. She admits that in the first version of her adaptation characters stand for her nuclear family members, her mother featuring as Bertha, her father impersonated by Rochester and herself identifying with Jane. Miranda and Jane, the two narrators are often read together by critics, too, Miranda regarded as a parallel character or even as a

reembodiment of Jane (Gutleben 2002: 16). Miranda's appropriation of Charlotte Brontë's name complicates her identity further as she also fictionalises herself as the Victorian author. She even envisions a twentieth-century career for Brontë compared to her own:

Yes, I think she might have followed a similar track. She'd have read English, probably, gone to London, taken a Ph.D – which might have interfered with her creativity.⁷⁹ She'd have married... I'm rather unusual in that I've only married once and I've stayed married...she might by now be on her second marriage, or be divorced and bringing up a couple of children on her own! Who can tell? She'd probably, like me, be teaching in a university. In other words, she'd be a much less interesting person! (D. M. Thomas 2000: 121).

This last comment on the hopelessness and unexciting nature of present times on the one hand acknowledges Matthew Sweet's emphasis of the complexity and colourfulness of the Victorian age contrasted to perceptions that only attribute such qualities to the twentieth-century as quoted in the first chapter, on the other hand it signals Miranda's identity crisis for whom an alternative life of a non-conformist creative writer would seem more appealing than her present one even if it was in the nineteenth century. When she explains to her roommate in Martinique that she has by mistake been identified as Charlotte Brontë instead of Miranda Stevenson, she comments: "Well, I feel I know her better than I know myself – though that's not saying a lot" (77).

Beside her accidental renaming to Charlotte Brontë, which she passes on to Juan, one of her lovers, Miranda also has other names: her mother used to call her Mandy, while her husband, David called her Andy to disguise their relationship from his then-wife. When her father, Ben puts her in the role of her mother, Miranda is called Emma which was her

⁷⁹ This remark contrasting academic career to creative writing can be read as an authorial metacommentary on the increasing split between academic and non-academic contexts at the same time as an ironic self-judgement, considering that many authors of post-Victorian fiction including D. M. Thomas have degrees in English Literature. Miranda's contrast of creativity and higher education is echoed by her father as well, who could be read as the author's mouthpiece: " 'Ah, yes – schools!' She [Miranda] knows what I [her father] think of that. They drain all the life, all the originality, out of you; I thank God I avoided them, and taught myself, surrounded by Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, and so on, in my uncle's library" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 140). Ironically, the self-educated antiquarian father does not recognise the fake manuscript and the institutionally educated daughter whose PhD presupposes that she has a Certificate of Good Conduct engages in faking a manuscript and creating a web of lies around it.

mother's first name. Besides she assumes the penname Jennifer Trefusis, Trefusis being her mother's maiden name. The fact that *Charlotte* functions as an adaptation of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*,⁸⁰ the latter text being "paid graceful tribute to" by Miranda in her conference presentation "as a brilliant exploration of Bertha" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 119), further multiplies the identities she owns and the resulting legacies thereof. Her tasks are to integrate her childhood self and the memory of her dead mother, her role as a lover of the married David, her function as a sexual substitute for her mother trying to please her father, and her writerly self assuming the identity of her mother. The missing mother often pointed out in readings of the Brontë sisters' texts seems to feature equally strongly in *Charlotte*: juxtaposing Antoinette's mother, Annette from *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Jane's mother of the Victorian novel, Emma's assumed madness and early death are both emphasised. The fact that Miranda fictionalises her mother as Bertha and makes her thus jump off a cliff and that she steps in for Emma to please Ben imply either that her sympathies lie with patriarchal readings or that she demonstrates how women become victims of patriarchal power. The exciting quality of the novel is exactly that we are offered both possibilities of interpretation and the two may even work together. Miranda's relationship to her husband can best be compared to that of Jane's with St. John, as the Victorian characters' relationship is usually read as a desexualised one, and Miranda is given a male name which underlines the complicity or friendship between her and her husband rather than a sexualised bonding. The couple does have children, yet Miranda rather looks for sexual satisfaction elsewhere and both her and her father seem to look down on David as a weakling and the marriage as a failure. The dead mother has many substitutes among the father's lovers: in the ghost-written Brontë novel there is Grace and in Ben's case that is a re-enactment of Rochester's story, a possible affair between Miranda's father and the historical author Jean Rhys surfaces in addition to numerous other lovers. This is how, as well as Brontë's, Rhys's biography also gets fictionalised.

D. M. Thomas is often criticised for his problematic portrayal of women (Nicols 2004: 12, Sue Thomas 2007: 108). His accomplishment in *Charlotte* is summarised as a "cross generational proliferation of pathologised Bertha Mason figures" (Sue Thomas 2007: 101). Most of these female characters, who, as exemplified by Sue Thomas, can be read as

⁸⁰ For a more detailed description of the parallels of Rhys and D. M. Thomas's novels see Sue Thomas 2007: 103-104.

versions of one figure, suffer ample mental or physical pain or both: Jane wants to commit suicide and dies of tropical fever; Grace loses her son to the pond where Jane attempts her suicide and later Grace also contracts tropical fever; Emma is depressed and commits suicide; and Miranda is traumatised by her mother's death as well as her father's sexual harassment in addition to being depressed by her marriage and life in general. These tragic female fates echo some critics' view on Charlotte Brontë's treatment of her characters discussed in the previous subchapter, except that the Victorian author is charged with handling most of her male characters in such a negative way. If, however, one surveys the male figures in *Charlotte* the picture does not look that different either: Rochester falls off his horse and dies very early on in the novel, Miranda's husband gets a nervous breakdown, her father is playing with the idea of committing suicide and her roommate's boyfriend dies in a plane crash. Although the identity quests are analysed from the points of view of the main narrators who are both female, it is visible that the situation of the male characters is just as bad. However, in my view the emphasis is not on "proliferating pathologies" per se, marking the author's perversities, but rather on the construction of white middle class identities (both male and female) as outcasts in a society where they are not marginalised or oppressed. To sum up, what emerges in terms of Miranda's identification process is that she has to account for so many identities she has acquired through her role playing games and has created through her ghostwriting, some of them quite traumatic, that she cannot develop a coherent self.

Accordingly, *Charlotte* does not show constructive signs of narrative authority and *Bildung*. First, Jane's development is quickly terminated by her death, a prototypical fate still provoking fictional mention in twentieth-century plotlines of post-Victorian fiction: "those pathetic, semi-arranged marriages involving a shipped-out bride and ending in tropical fever." (Swift 1992: 34). Second, Miranda's disconcerting account rather resembles Antoinette's Gothic finishing of her story. Miranda is pregnant not knowing whose child she is carrying but she tells her father it is his, not being quite clear whether she means it literally or metaphorically, and she splits up with her husband, David who breaks down and refuses to move out of their flat. Her father suggests that she finds a Grace Poole to mind David in the attic room he is finally accorded. This turn of events appears to reverse the first marriage attempt in the Victorian text with Bertha still alive, making David, the husband a prisoner and Miranda, the wife the master of the house. This

interweaving of fiction with the empirical reality of Miranda's existence admittedly results from her complete dissatisfaction with her life as it is:

I'd gone to university, got into sex and drugs, failed my first exams, had my first breakdown, then went to a third-rate poly where I scraped a pass (almost impossible not to) and met David, Art and Design Tutor with Wife and Toddler [...]. Then marriage, kids, Valium, a flat in Sidcup, a maisonette in Blackheath, a lectureship in Women's Studies in the same third-rate poly, now laughingly described as a university, a minor reputation as a narrowly-based academic, Prozac, an increasing urge to escape from reality into fiction as that eighteen-year-old gym-slipped girl did. There you have it, dear reader (D. M. Thomas 2000: 109).

As already analysed in terms of reader inclusion in the previous subchapter, compared to Jane's anxious call to her "Dear Reader" asking for understanding and acknowledgement, Miranda's comment "There you have it, dear reader" marks a disillusioned pilgrimage admitting a number of problems inherent in white middle class (women's) life. As the above quote shows, the concerns range from the twentieth-century refashioning of the Victorian madness topos by transforming the nineteenth-century social epidemic, hysteria into today's *Prozac Nation*,⁸¹ through questioning the validity of available white middle class identities of married women and academics, to the escapism into fictional identities, eventually leading into (re)reading and (re)writing that could pave the way for the reconsideration of available social models.

In the sense of channelling her dissatisfaction with her status into (re)writing and thus attempting to break out of social conventions, Miranda's narrative resembles Jane's of *Jane Eyre*. In parallel to allowing Jane a second marriage and an alternative fate in the West-Indies in the ghost-written version, Miranda herself explores the ex-colony in her escape from her own dysfunctional marriage in the twentieth-century plotline. Already in

⁸¹ This is the title of a novel by Elisabeth Wurtzel, which was presented by Marta Miquel-Baldellou as an example for rethinking female hysteria in post-Victorian fiction. According to the presenter, today's hysteria called depression arises from women's realisation that it is existentially impossible to acquire a unified self-identity in postmodern culture (Miquel-Baldellou, 2008). *Charlotte* was not discussed by the speaker but fits the concept.

Martinique, she remembers having met Jean Rhys in her childhood and equates the author with her most famous novel that Miranda rereads for her story. This is how *Wide Sargasso Sea* becomes contextualised and underlines a historical continuity⁸² in rewriting *Jane Eyre*. If Miranda is read as a postmodern version of Jane or, for that matter, Charlotte Brontë, then the rewriting happens doubly, that is, in both plotlines, not to mention the other female figures that, as described above, could all prefigure alternative fates for the female narrator. Finally, through divorcing David and being pregnant with her third child, Miranda seems to follow the line she has mapped out for the Victorian author, Brontë: “She’d have married... I’m rather unusual in that I’ve only married once and I’ve stayed married...she might by now be on her second marriage, or be divorced and bringing up a couple of children on her own! Who can tell?” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 121). Having escaped “with Jane” to the West-Indies and repeatedly attempting to remedy her own traumas by constructing narratives similar to both Jane’s and Antoinette’s, Miranda returns to England to live the life she has imagined for Charlotte Brontë in the twentieth century. Thus, (re)writing gains the important function of substituting, sometimes even foreshadowing life.⁸³

“Jane Eyre’s daydreaming stems from an unsatisfying life, and she was not alone,” comments Patsy Stoneman on the sensitivity of creating parallel worlds in *Jane Eyre* and its adaptations (2006: 182). Not only imaginary characters regard reading and writing as an escape from life, but also authors of fiction as the example of Anita Brookner proves whose novels also reverberate with various motifs of *Jane Eyre* (Jones, 2008), not to mention readers of literary works. As a decipherer of Flaubert’s life and work, the narrator of Julian Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984) explains why he thinks many peoples privilege fiction over the empirical reality of their lives:

My wife: someone I feel I understand less well than a foreign writer dead for a hundred years. Is this an aberration, or is it normal? Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren’t. I’m not surprised some people prefer books. Books

⁸² The account of a personal meeting with Jean Rhys and the acclaim of her text could also be read as an authorisation for further adapting *Jane Eyre* on the one hand, and for doing this by utilising *Wide Sargasso Sea* on the other.

⁸³ The relationship between life and writing is also fictionalised in literary biographies and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.1.

make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people's lives, never your own (Barnes 1990: 168).

Ironically, the *Oxford World's Classics Complete List 2008* addressed to potential readers advertises *Jane Eyre* together with some other novels under the heading *Escape* with the following introduction: "This is a collection of books to provide an escape for anyone who needs to get away, whatever it is they're fleeing from. Take them on holiday, read them on the bus, snuggle into bed with them at night, give them to someone who needs to break out" (48). Jane, the self-conscious narrator of *Charlotte* openly admits that her writing is a flight from life, which can also be read as a twentieth-century comment on both the Victorian author and her novel *Jane Eyre*: "Even though we weep over tender death-bed scenes, do we not read and write novels in order to escape from the sheer terror of real life?" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 37). Concerning the authorship of post-Victorian fiction, Miranda's status of a mediocre lecturer producing such dubious texts may read as Thomas's devaluation of Victorian pastiche (Gutleben 2001: 180), which would then function as a metacommentary having the author criticise his own work. This way, similarly to the fictionalising of the originality-plagiarism debate his *White Hotel* triggered, Thomas has also already encoded into *Charlotte* the critique of the suspect phenomenon of professors of English adapting nineteenth-century fiction. It emerges then that the role of rewriting mainly consists of providing a way of escape and a source of remedy, so it has both the nostalgic function of searching for an imaginary home and a remedial one of easing or possibly curing traumas.⁸⁴

The process of rewriting yields multiple products in *Charlotte*: a faked manuscript, an alternative ending to the novel *Jane Eyre*, and the entire novel itself as a post-Victorian adaptation of the Victorian text and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The fake Brontë manuscript is an explicitly cherished cultural object by its intended audience, Miranda's father. His enthusiasm is reminiscent of the worshipped only copy of *Great Expectations* in *Mister Pip* (2006) and the manuscript of *Jane Eyre* in *The Eyre Affair* (2001) to be discussed in the next chapter. In the two other post-Victorian novels considered here for comparison the authorship of the respective nineteenth-century novels is unquestionable, whereas in

⁸⁴ This instance provides a good example of a context where nostalgia could be utilised for reading as a constructive tool, as proposed by Su (introduced in Chapter 2).

Charlotte the father and his graphologist expert's belief in the authenticity of the forged manuscript puts such blind insistence on the originality of historical texts into question. *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* also feature as acknowledged source texts, cultural objects which, together with their authors, assume the roles of being central determinants of Miranda's life and narrative in a similar fashion as *Great Expectations* enhances Mathilda's fate and account in *Mister Pip*.

There are two visual objects in the novel, which are extra-textual in the sense that they are not reflected on by either narrator, still they provide a commentary on the themes of colonisation, its legacies and sexuality prevalently featuring in both accounts thus influencing emerging narratives of identity. One of these is a nineteenth-century map extract titled 'Martinique, French West Indies 1847' (D. M. Thomas 2000: 6) and the other is a photograph of two almost naked headless characters, a man and a woman facing each other at the seaside, titled 'Martinique, French West Indies 1999' (D. M. Thomas 2000: 68).⁸⁵ The first image immediately precedes Jane's narrative, so this is the first thing we see right after the title, which provides the reader with some hints as to where the journey might lead in the Victorian plotline. The puzzle gets resolved by the end of Jane's narrative once she decides to travel to Martinique to find Bertha and Rochester's son, Robert. The twentieth-century plotline is introduced by the second image, the photograph of the two half nudes, and accordingly the whole of Miranda's account that follows takes place in Martinique and is full of sexual encounters. Critical reactions to this second image are mostly negative. D. M. Thomas is either accused of a similarly sensationalist bias for the insertion of this photograph as in his use of a title that only includes references to a celebrity Victorian author and her character (Gutleben 2001: 183), or of turning his audience into resistant readers disgusted by the picture's shocking focus on sexual organs (Sue Thomas 2007: 109-110).

I think that the reason for inserting this photograph into the book may have less to do with popularistic aims than with the subversive aspect of the novel. Looking at it in terms of space, time and plot, this is where Jane and a century later also Miranda is going. The sexuality of both female characters receives emphasis in the tropical location: Jane

⁸⁵ See Appendix 1.3 for the two images.

becomes a lover and happily married though short-lived wife to Robert Rochester in the West-Indies after the death of her impotent husband back in England, and Miranda gets involved in various similarly fleeting sexual affairs with the locals of Martinique helping her to temporally forget her frustrating marriage back home. The two plotlines are usually read as complementary, Miranda authoring Jane's relationship as a romantic and recuperative contrast to her own disconcerting experiences (Gutleben 2001: 202-203, Sue Thomas 2007: 103). Accepting this reading, Jane's image on the cover page in full travel outfit emphasising her face and upper body, contextualised in the previous chapter as one of the typical post-Victorian visuals raising reader expectations, can be countered to the photo corresponding more to Miranda's experiences of impersonal promiscuity. The impersonality of promiscuity is emphasised, on the one hand, by the fact that the photo, probably taken around sunset, is black and white, which makes it difficult to establish the colour of the two half nudes it depicts. The most likely version is that the male model is black and the female one is white, but other hybridised identities are also possible. On the other hand, the fact that the original title of the photo 'Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, partially clothed man and woman on beach (B&W)' (Pillitz, 1993) refers to a different location from the one in the title accorded to it by D. M. Thomas, 'Martinique, French West Indies 1999' also seems to suggest that it does not really matter where such encounters take place, the image of one can be plagiarised for that of another.

The shocking nature of the picture following the account of Rochester's impotence can be interpreted differently again if viewed from the subversive perspective, in which case the end of Jane's narrative detailing their sexual failure with her husband foreshadows the kind of rewriting that is to be expected. Also, related to the first image of the map, which neither critic accounts for, the photo has an additional contrastive function, especially since the only difference between the titles of the two images inserted into the novel is their time reference. Hence, if one follows the order of the images from the Victorian woman in travel outfit on the cover page, through the nineteenth-century map of Martinique, to the photo of the two half nudes on the West Indian seaside, the transition is more subtle than it emerges at first sight. This sequence of images depicts the Englishwoman's journey announced in the title (all three women, Jane, Charlotte Brontë and Miranda assuming the Victorian author's name included) to the Caribbean indicated by the visuals (and thus referring to the Rhys text), where she has sexual encounters with the locals.

The photo summons further readings if examined in close connection with Jane's story and all accounts that follow the insertion of the picture. The storylines thus juxtaposed invite an analysis of the connections between sexuality and (post)colonialism, whose dominant narratives the text subverts in both centuries. Clearing the ignorance Victorian women were left in concerning their sexuality, through her unsuccessful liaison with Rochester, Jane is paired up with Rochester and Bertha's child, Robert. This move, according to Gutleben, makes her a parallel character to Bertha due to the foregrounding of the repressed sexuality of the Victorian woman locked away in the attic (Gutleben 2001: 96). However, as opposed to Bertha, Jane experiences a sexual-sensual pilgrimage, which ends in a quasi-incestuous relationship with her step-son. Her liberated state does not last long, since she soon dies of tropical fever, a prototypical ending suggesting that metropolitans cannot accommodate to the climate of the colonies, or more dramatically, that the colony takes its revenge on the body of the coloniser. Acting as sexual enlighteners and knowers of secrets, Miss Temple and Grace get accorded a more complex role here than in the previous two texts. Miss Temple as a friend helps Jane realise that something is wrong with Rochester, since their sexual encounters do not provide the heroine with either satisfaction or children. The role of Grace is rewritten so that she is not only Rochester's *confidante* but also one of Rochester's secret affairs, a possibility that could be speculated on in connection with the Victorian text. Hence, in *Charlotte* Grace has the knowledge she has had in *Jane Eyre*, the connective function between Jane, Rochester and Bertha emphasised by her additional narrative instance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is completed by her access to Robert, and a temporary membership in the family when she bears the child from the affair until it later drowns. By becoming one of Rochester's lovers, she impersonates one possible script for Jane as do all the similarly unwritten narratives of the other women from Rochester's past: the French Céline Varens, the Italian Giacinta and the German Clara. Finally, Grace assumes the role of the psychological prison-ward of the Victorian author as well; in her conference presentation Miranda analyses her as a discipliner of "Charlotte's unruly id" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 119). All this knowledge and her ability to become a discipliner not only to the desires of characters but also to those of authors make her, also in this novel, reminiscent of Nelly Dean in *Wuthering Heights* who may be read as a possible

manipulator of events as well as an agent and representative of patriarchy aiding in the repression of the female subconscious.⁸⁶

Miranda also appears to revisit Charlotte's oppressed sexuality by adopting the nineteenth-century writer's name for her various affairs in the West-Indies. However, the assumed identity of the dead Victorian author, though entertaining Miranda, also has a ghastly and depressing quality: she experiences these sexual encounters in a similarly dead state: "From somewhere near the ceiling I looked down at our entwined bodies, distantly, with amusement. It's said that newly-dead people do this – look down at their corpses. The difference was, I wasn't newly dead; I died a long time ago. I have drowned. I am underwater" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 71-72). This statement, underlining her ghostwriter status, not only reflects her negative judgement of her own life but also provides further possibilities of identification with her mother who jumped off the cliff into the water in Miranda's first version of ending *Jane Eyre* as well as with Grace's child who drowned in a pond.⁸⁷ These two identities become one in her father's diary when the father relates how Miranda accuses him of having ruined her life: "And much more of the same, mad, unreal: how I'd drowned her, as I drowned her mother; how she existed underwater, like a submarine; how all those years alone with me made it impossible for her to find a different life" (153).⁸⁸ This motif of death-in-life also occurs when Miranda characterises her husband to one of her West-Indian lovers. First she lies that she has lost him in a heart attack, then she admits that she does not like her married life, describing her husband as she has described herself earlier: "My husband's alive; but dead – you now?" (92). Miranda fantasises about her husband's death to Juan, a local teacher, who becomes her lover and later turns out to be a gay-hater gay man, who adopts the name Charlotte for his reverence for Miranda. Miranda's sexual affairs include numerous locals; she seems to pick her partners randomly and enjoy interracial sex, which she sees as her longing for colour.

⁸⁶ For more on Nelly Dean's narrative authority, see my MA thesis, "A Comparative Analysis of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Findling*" (2001).

⁸⁷ Jane also tries to drown herself in the pond where Grace's son and many other people have died but Grace saves her.

⁸⁸ The strong control of the father over his daughter's life is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* of which *Charlotte* is also a rewriting, as the daughter's name, Miranda indicates. It is out of the focus of this dissertation to engage with correspondences between these two texts, however reading them together may also yield interesting analogies.

These affairs raise various issues including sexuality, oppression, interracial exploitation and promiscuity that point back to nineteenth-century practices as well.

Robert Young construes Victorian cultural interaction between races as copulation: “Nineteenth-century theories of race were not about differentiations between self and other: they were about people having sex” (1994: 34). The way he compares forms of sexual exchange incited by colonialism to modes of economic exchange as “commerce,” blends in with what Ciolkowski claims about a slaveholder in her analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* “producing ‘half-caste’ bastards almost as quickly as he produces profits” (Ciolkowski 1997). Rochester’s rejection of sex with Antoinette/Bertha in the Rhys text is also perceived as his rejection of cultural and racial mixing. In *Charlotte* this imperial narrative returns when Robert Rochester attributes the failure of his father’s marriage to the fact that he was born a black child, which sometimes happens in genetics but Rochester straightaway understood it as his wife’s unfaithfulness and the burden of colour as a proof thereof. The union of Jane and Robert is thus understood as a revision of imperialist English identity, since the Creole and mixed identities change from the status of constituting a threat to that of a fruitful hybridity; and all that is repressed in Victorian narratives appears remedial here (Gutleben 2001: 179). To qualify the statement, could appear remedial if Miranda’s twentieth-century reflections voiced in the similarly interwoven context of sexuality and postcolonialism did not indicate that not only does the nineteenth-century exploitative context remain still unresolved but its ideology continues to affect twentieth-century identities as well:

He was fucking me, seeing me as French, probably a *métropolitaine*, in my hired car – and he was also fucking France and Europe, that had given him good roads and unemployment benefit, and in return demanded that he give up only his proud independence and become a slave. And the tragedy was [...] that he couldn’t see any way of *not* being a slave; trapped by the state’s benevolence, and the petrol stations and the shopping malls, and the car in almost every family (so my guidebook informed me). The plantation slaves of the last century could rebel, or try to escape, because life was toil and suffering; but there was no escaping from the soft life (D. M. Thomas 2000: 80).

As Miranda reports, eighteenth and nineteenth-century slavery is transformed into modern day slavery, where sexual and political exploitation continue in the framework of consumer society and commodity culture. She is aware of the harmful effect of this process on the locals, yet she is part of it assuming the status of a member of the dominant culture, seeing herself as a “*métropolitaine*,” coming from the centre of the historical empire to the periphery of the ex-colony. Sex and colonisation are closely intertwined in her narrative, for example, when she asks one of the natives to go home with her, this is how she describes his reaction: “He was flustered. ‘I like you too.’ I could see desire and decorum fighting in his anguished face, like the English and the French over the Antilles” (104-5). Though both are acknowledged in the English Miranda’s account, as critics also claim, the English and the French colonisers are not given equal commemoration: it is mostly French colonialism that receives criticism in the novel and little is said about the English one. While Rhys offers a revision of English abolition in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, D. M. Thomas advances a protective attitude towards it in *Charlotte* by leaving its legacies unexamined (Sue Thomas 2007: 111).⁸⁹ In the above block quote Miranda twice refers to France specifically and Europe as a global coloniser, but does not mention England, and items of French vocabulary are constantly mixed into her English account whenever colonisation becomes the focus of attention: “The black islanders had been liberated by being absorbed, as a goose is liberated from its nature by being stuffed with food and turned into *foi gras* (D. M. Thomas 2000: 87). The profane reference to sexual intercourse keeps appearing in a postcolonial context, amongst others when Miranda is having sex with Caribbean men for their colour and is fantasising about butterfly-intercourse “wanting to know how does it feel to be weightless and fucking! [...] me so white yearning for blackness” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 83) and also when she enquires about her father’s relationship to the author, Jean Rhys “Did you fuck her, Daddy?” (152), which, as Gutleben also notes, metaphorically implies the rape of her text as well (2001: 181), though fuck and rape may not mean the same. Rochester’s death once he gets confronted with his impotence, Miranda’s access to her father’s sexual perversities preserved in journals for after his death and the numerous sex scenes verging on violent pornography while reflecting on historical

⁸⁹ There are hints at the legacies of English slavery in Jane’s narrative but they are left unreflected. Jane expresses pride about the English abolition (D. M. Thomas: 2000: 163), yet French slaves appear freer and more content to her in their manners which, according to a Frenchman, is due to the French colonisers’ respect towards the slaves’ families in contrast to the English ones who split them up (112).

injustices would probably summon similar critical voices as D. M. Thomas's *White Hotel* did, attacking as distasteful his frequent connections of sex and death while appropriating important historical events, with a minority claiming that it is precisely by the boundary-breaking juxtaposition of such extremes that he effectively shows the violence of historical events (Nicol 2004: 12). Whichever group one agrees with, what *Charlotte* achieves is connecting the prevalent discourses of colonialism and sexuality with those of producing and reproducing literature, thus linking the political and the erotic to the aesthetic. This linkage, overtly fictionalised by interweaving and topicalising the act of writing with sexual and (post)colonial accounts, is much more apparent than in other postcolonial novels like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, for example.

Connecting sexuality to spaces of identification, *Charlotte* presents a very similar rewriting to *Wide Sargasso Sea*: in neither of the plotlines of D. M. Thomas's text do sexual experiences in England yield pleasant memories, whereas such explorations in the West Indies appear more liberating. Jane's futile attempts at sexual intercourse with the impotent Rochester take place at Thornfield Hall which she leaves and never returns to after Rochester's death. Miranda's sexually frustrating marriage is located in London and the traumatic sexual abuse she has been experiencing since her childhood takes place in Cornwall where her father still resides. Jane's nineteenth-century pilgrimage then leads to the West-Indies in search of Antoinette and Rochester's son, a journey which Miranda repeats, giving a conference paper on Charlotte Brontë there in the twentieth-century part. Robert Rochester's letter is also addressed from Martinique, thus the postcolonial location is where the bulk of the narratives are set. Here Jane has the space to explore her sexuality and get pregnant by Robert, and Miranda also engages in numerous affairs with the locals and also expects a baby as a result, later confessing to her father that she has planned this in advance: "I think I set out to get pregnant. I want this child to be just mine" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 158). Jane dies during her pregnancy but Miranda "takes" the foetus back to England and decides to settle with it in Cornwall. If Miranda is read as a postmodern Jane, then she completes her predecessor's pilgrimage by both reinstating the dominant narrative since she "imports" an embryo to England to exert her ownership, and deconstructing it as she purposely acts in favour of hybridisation. This double interpretive potential makes the novel so intriguing: both Jane and Miranda essentially produce colonial accounts in the West Indies, still their life choices and narrative comments partially constitute postcolonial

critiques of these. Jane, though full of patriotic feelings and national pride for England, marries the black Robert and opens up to the perspective of the colonised⁹⁰ and Miranda, despite her sexually exploiting the locals, is equally open to understand them not to mention her bitter or ironic comments on the still ongoing Western colonisation.

In terms of characters' finding their own space or home, the nineteenth-century plotline seems more radical than the twentieth-century one. Jane does not return to England as she realises that her love for Robert is stronger than her home-sickness especially that all that still connects her to England, such as language or literature, is cultural which she can share with Robert. Robert's position is very clear all along, in contrast to Antoinette who idealises England, he shows no interest in going there: "I was and am a child of the sun, of the tropics; and I had no wish to take possession of a mansion where my mother had been made to suffer so much" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 166). Thus Jane gives up her home for the West Indies, with the awareness that she is resettling in an English colony; however, her author, Miranda does not allow her to maintain this decision and kills her, thereby joining the line of historical authors accused of disposing of their characters the same way: Charlotte Brontë and D. M. Thomas. In the twentieth-century plotline Miranda herself establishes a connection between her own lineage and that of her literary predecessors, which makes Cornwall, the place she moves back to from the West Indies and eventually identifies as her home, a site of cultural heritage. In parallel to Charlotte Brontë's mother, Miranda also grew up in Cornwall, and like the Brontë sisters, she also had a Cornish mother. She might have met Jean Rhys while the author lived in Cornwall and Miranda's father might have had an affair with the postcolonial writer at the same time. Sue Thomas also speculates on Cornwall as a site of internal British imperialism, constructing the unsuccessful English/Celtic marriage of Miranda's parents in the light of repeated failures of attempts at acquiring Cornish autonomy based on their Celtic heritage put down by the English (2007: 112). The discovery and romanticisation of Cornwall that emerged in the 1870s (Samuel 1999: 59) leading to later revivals, seems to take a different direction in the post-Victorian *Charlotte*. In this novel Cornwall assumes a paradoxical function of a site for the search for lineage and a place of disturbing memories to which Miranda is driven at

⁹⁰ Had she been able to live in the West Indies longer and immerse in local communities better, she would most probably have developed a similar sensibility towards slavery and its legacies to Emily Cartwright's in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) to be discussed in the next chapter.

the same time as she strives to get away from them. That is why her eventual return to Cornwall and her father seems rather ambivalent. On the one hand, it may be claimed that after various detours she again finds her roots integrating literary lineage as well as colonial legacies by choosing a place she associates with Brontë and Rhys both of whose texts she rewrites and expecting a child from a black West Indian man, respectively. On the other hand, this decision can also be read as Miranda's succumbing to her father's abuse by assuming her mother's role in the nuclear family to be, thereby exposing herself to the repetition of the sexual perversities she experienced as a child and to being further traumatised rather than healed.

Both Jane and Miranda perceive the West-Indies in their own national and cultural terms, which means that experiences of Martinique are reported contrastively, best observed through their commentary concerning local cultural memory. One such momentum is Diamond Rock of Martinique, which was occupied by the English during the Napoleonic Wars. Jane expresses her pride of the English navy for its victory over nature and the French (D. M. Thomas 2000: 114), while Miranda is not proud of English colonialism, yet she makes an imperial association, which again is embedded into a sexual comparison: "The surf is restless, angry, white-crested here [at Diamond Rock], because it's the Atlantic; and it strikes me that there is no land between here and Land's End in Cornwall where I grew up. It's a kind of close connection, and at the same time far distant, like sex" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 102). Apart from some small groups of islands, it is only the Atlantic Ocean that separates Britain from its ex-colony, bringing the memory of Diamond Rock being in British colonial possession dangerously close. The description of Diamond Rock, "[c]ut into many facets, it did seem to glitter like a diamond" (D. M. Thomas 2000: 102) echoes the qualities of glass objects similarly refracting light discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly to those of the glass church in *Oscar and Lucinda* or the Crystal Palace, cultural memories related to Diamond Rock are also diverse. As it emerges from the quote, Diamond Rock not only provides various possible readings through its multifacetedness, but also incites promises of wealth, like the perception of the Crystal Palace from within, in *Emma Brown*: "We are inside the largest diamond in the world" (Boylan 2004: 395).

The other West Indian cultural memento offering equally versatile readings is a place called *tombeau des caraïbes*, introduced as an important site of cultural memory for the

locals: “He [Juan] said it was where the last surviving Carib chiefs jumped off the cliff to their death, after drinking poison, rather than be killed by the white men. ‘And as they leapt into the sea, they called on the sacred mountain to avenge them’ ” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 94). Miranda keeps searching for a memorial, some material sight commemorating this important historical event but her local companion reminds her that there is nothing to see, they only remember. Her behaviour is understandable from her cultural context, where everything of relevance requires monumental architecture and huge media coverage as the example of the building of the Millennium Dome her husband, David engages in constructing illustrates. Read contrastively to the Caribbean locals’ belief in their sacred place for which they do not need an object, it seems ironic that David gets a nervous breakdown trying to model the Dome’s Faith Zone for which he is desperately trying to find a material representation but fails to do so possibly due to his lack of faith. He illustrates the problem with a black joke, which, apart from providing his opinion about institutionalised religion, involves massacre just like the case of the *tombeau des caraïbes*: “[...] he had to come up with ideas for what to put in the Faith Zone. No one wanted it except the Church. There would be endless opportunity for causing offence to people. David said, with a black chuckle he thought they should just have giant TV screens showing the Christian Serbs killing innocent Moslem Albanians” (D. M. Thomas 2000: 100). This ironic view of the whole venture of the Millennium Dome pushing up housing prices, ruining the economy and characterised by a complete lack of ideas as described in the previous chapter is maintained in the entire novel. As we have seen, D. M. Thomas’s *Charlotte* facilitates a complex reading of (post)colonial and (post)imperial spaces related to national and cultural identities. This complexity is further refined by the introduction of the trope of travel and island fiction for the analysis of some novels in Chapter 4.

3.3 “Amen! Even so come the Lord of Angels”– Ending(s), Adaptations and Motifs

Contrary to the title of Chapter 3.1 “Reader, I married him,” which most readers and adaptors remember as the closing of the Brontë text whereas it is only the first sentence of the last chapter of *Jane Eyre*, the heading of this section is its very last sentence, and the actual ending of the novel. A common feature of these two utterances is that they both constitute difficulties in interpreting the resolution of the plot and the narrative, discrediting attempts at comprehensive teleological readings. Critics mostly blame Brontë

for her inconsistencies. One such accusation points towards the author's illogical confusion of genres, by allowing a romantic solution of a realistic plot letting Jane inherit a fortune and enter a marriage even though her fate points in a very different direction (Levine 1981: 182). This view results in categorising the text as romance fiction. Other critics regard the novel as an instance of sensation fiction characterised by a generic mix of gothic and romance fiction, related to the detective novel, the novel of mystery and fashionable life, all in all a genre symptomatic of the decline in nineteenth-century literary taste (Marsh 1995: 100-101), which sounds quite prescriptive in its apparent distinction of high and low genres. Beside such devaluations of its literary merits, the feminist achievements of *Jane Eyre* are also attacked not only disapproving of the heroine's marriage and inheritance, but also objecting to the fact that her account ignores important feminist and postcolonial narrative aspects as described in the previous two sections.

Juxtaposing these concerns of plot resolution and narrative authority/authorship, Carolyn Williams argues that the ending of the novel recreates exactly the same ambivalence of voice in the text which Charlotte Brontë had to confront as a female author in the nineteenth century. This way St. John not only represents the other male, the life-option Jane rejects, but also a powerful narrative that determines literary history "which like apostolic succession, has been structured as a chain of inherited authority" (1997: 246). Consequently, finishing her narrative by the Bible quote through the mouthpiece of the rejected character St. John, Jane acknowledges that she writes herself into the male tradition at the same time as distancing herself from it: "in closing her book, Jane closes with the other Book" (246). This juxtaposition seems fruitful in more respects. On the one hand it synthesises contradictory opinions about the text's feminism, amalgamating attacks on Brontë's bias in letting Jane disregard other marginalised voices and praises on how through Jane's narrative her author established herself in the literary tradition: we cannot expect Brontë to have written a post-Victorian novel in the nineteenth-century literary environment, especially that in order to acquire a reading public she had to succumb to the reigning male literary tradition first. On the other hand it sheds light on the current status of *Jane Eyre* adaptations. Most adaptors engage with the last major plot move, Jane's marriage to Rochester introduced by the first sentence of the final chapter and work on rewriting it into a more plausible story, producing so many versions that critics have already started grouping them (Detmers 2007: 81-97). The very last passages of the novel

usually feature in these texts to mark the impossibility of Jane's opting for St. John,⁹¹ and not as Williams reads them in terms of narrative and authorial power.

As already indicated, one major trend *Jane Eyre* adaptations follow is the rewriting of the Victorian ending aiming to correct the implausible happiness of Jane and Rochester's marriage. A representative contemporary example of this is Clare Boylan's "*Jane Eyre* Revisited: An Alternative Ending" (1990), which was commissioned by the women's magazine *Good Housekeeping* (<http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/>). This version starts with Jane returning to Thornfield Hall and marrying the maimed Rochester. They move to Ferndean where Rochester entertains Jane with the stories about women of his earlier travels and Jane describes her daily exquisite clothing that she fantasises for her blind husband. One day it turns out that Rochester is not blind at all, he just keeps on tricking Jane as he has done earlier when he cross-dressed as a fortune teller, for example. The appalled Jane confirms this with their staff and is further shocked: "Reader, I cannot fully express the dismay I encountered when the servants met my gaze. 'You knew!' I exclaimed. 'You have all been party to my deception' " (Boylan 1990: 139). When she confronts Rochester he admits that he has tricked her into the marriage because he did not want to lose her. Even his mysterious telepathic call to Jane, which critics have difficulty finding an explanation for, has been part of this cheat because, as Rochester relates, he followed Jane, crouched below her window and produced it himself. Jane hits her husband in return and reveals her knowledge of how Rochester has tricked all previous women into bigamous marriages so that he can keep on playing his secret games in various liaisons. Rochester's reply is "You are mad" (140) and thus Jane gets put into the role of Bertha and locked into the attic while her husband roams about in Europe. However, this state of events is again reversed when Jane receives a telegram with the news of her husband's death in a Paris shooting incident, so she is freed from her prison and travels to India to care for the ailing St. John. "What is to follow I do not know" (140) is the last sentence of the story leaving it open to further sequels.

⁹¹ It is interesting how bodily incapable the spiritually possibly matching St. John must become, literally expecting his death, to make him unsuitable for Jane. In this context the novel's last passages on the level of the plot clearly indicate that if Jane had followed St. John she might have met death as well, so she obviously made a wise choice rejecting him.

This intriguing revision is followed by another advertisement renewing the competition titled *Can you beat Brontë?* (141) featuring Boylan as one of the judges, this time asking for revisions of the Victorian novel from the point where Jane leaves Thornfield Hall after their unsuccessful marriage attempt with Rochester. This choice is probably not coincidental as until this point the plot seems coherent lacking the later impeding telepathic cry, inherited fortune and unlikely marriage. Ironically, the forum announcing the competition is a regular women's magazine that includes household, cooking and beauty tips as well as literature, as its name, *Good Housekeeping* also betrays. In this context, Boylan's angry ending is doubly framed also inviting a twentieth-century reading. The fact that it is a women's magazine that announces such a competition reinforces traditional stereotypes that the audience of romance novels are necessarily women, especially housewives who, after finding the recipe of the day and the newest fashion tips, have the time to read such works. If we go along with this assumption, *Good Housekeeping* could be perceived as a forum for married women who grew up on romances and live in realistic marriages to vent their experiences mismatching their earlier readings. In this sense the call for twentieth-century women to change romantic endings of canonical novels in the framework of a traditional women's magazine recalling Victorian manuals of good female behaviour resembles Brontë's ambivalent situation in writing herself into the nineteenth-century literary tradition. The other cultural significance of the competition is that, just like the reading clubs introduced in the previous chapter, such events not only creatively engage readership in collaborative authoring, but also enhance the (re)reading of canonised fiction and, as the prizes to be won are further books, of reading per se.

Seven years after Boylan had created this ending, Sutherland published a paper with the title "Can Jane Eyre be happy?", where he speculates on the possibility of the same closing activating the Bluebeard-parallel as a legitimate source text for the novel: "But what if, like Edward Rochester, after ten years of marriage, his sight were to return and – barring the minor blemish of a missing hand (common enough, and even rather glamorous in these post-war years) – Bluebeard still cut a handsome figure. Could one be entirely confident that his wife-killing ways would not return?" (1997: 80). Just like Rochester himself in Boylan's revision, Sutherland also stresses the character's fear of losing Jane as the only possible subject to marry in his maimed state. The critic claims that Rochester would not have asked Jane (a person who is unimportant enough not to attract too much public

attention) to marry him if his marriage to Bertha had not been detected, neither would he have approached her for a second time, had he not been too maimed to be suitable for anyone else (79-80). These two reactions again prove that fictional revision often precedes critical analyses of the same kind so, as underlined in the previous two chapters as well, it is essential that fiction is also read as criticism. Fascinated with Brontë, Boylan has finally made her name by writing an ending to another one of the Victorian author's stories, a fragment titled *Emma*, which became the novel *Emma Brown* (2003). As she says in the interview published after the novel, proudly bearing the same initials as her literary predecessor, Clare Boylan wanted to be true to the nineteenth-century writer's supposed intentions and wrote this story after some research as a great London novel. This novel set in the capital also endeavoured to echo *Jane Eyre* which Boylan essentially regards as: "sexual excitement generated through intellectual debate" (2004: 440), as her above reviewed finishing touches to the story also prove. The novels Ines Detmers analyses under the title "'The Second Mrs. Rochesters': Telling Untold Stories of Jane Eyre's (Im)Possible Married Lives" also concentrate on the aspect of sexuality and unmask the happy ending of the Victorian text as a marriage haunted by Rochester's past (2007: 89-94).⁹² The same happens in *Charlotte* with the difference that Rochester is quickly disposed of and Jane receives a second chance to re-enact the marriage scene with Rochester's son in the West Indies, however, this option is also short-lived as she soon dies of tropical fever.

The other important trend in adapting *Jane Eyre* is the confirmation of the original ending complemented by an abundant supply of alternative stories to amend the plot. Strangely, however revolutionary it is otherwise, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is such a text, leaving the plot of Brontë's work largely untouched since it constitutes a prequel to the Victorian novel, excludes Jane's perspective and provides Antoinette/Bertha's story instead. Likewise, in Emma Tennant's *Adèle* which refashions *Jane Eyre* in three slightly different versions as described in the previous chapter Jane and Rochester's happy marriage is retained and subordinated to the story of the latter's ward, the little French girl Adèle. In her preface the

⁹² Though it does not feature in Detmer's analysis, Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) is a successful early rewriting of *Jane Eyre* in this respect, repeating the paradigm of marrying a plain young woman to a rich old man with a house haunted by a "mad" wife. The movie Alfred Hitchcock produced of this novel in 1940, further underlines its uncanny aspects. For more critical engagement with *Rebecca* see Barbara Schaff's "The Strange Afterlives of *Jane Eyre*" (Schaff 2007: 25-36) or Verena-Susanna Nungesser's "From Thornfield Hall to Manderley and Beyond: *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* as Transformations of the Fairy Tale, the Novel of Development, and the Gothic Novel" (Nungesser 2007: 209-226).

author makes sure that her audience identifies the heroine, by explaining Adèle's function and story in *Jane Eyre* as well as by quoting the passage which last addresses her fate in the Victorian novel, promising a more complex depiction of her full story than Jane has done in *Jane Eyre*. Similarly to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the novel has a more complicated narrative structure than their nineteenth-century source text. Five narrators are employed Adèle featuring the most, Edward Rochester the second, and Grace, Mrs. Fairfax as well as an impersonal third-person narrator get accorded minor roles. This adaptation clearly shows the influence of previous refashionings and critical analyses. Neither Jane nor Antoinette/Bertha have their own narrative voice but Jane's story is maintained and Antoinette's identity as a "normal bride" is consistently distinguished from Bertha the "madwoman's," which is surely related to the author's knowledge of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as well as Gilbert and Gubar's famous reading of *Jane Eyre*. Rochester is in love with Céline Varens in Paris, and thinks to have killed his rival, the vicomte in a duel, but he turns out to be wrong as the vicomte survives.⁹³ In *Adèle* it is Mrs Fairfax who stands behind all the follies, which is also a conclusion Sutherland comes to in his article five years before the novel's publication. According to the critic it is Mrs Fairfax who twice gives away Rochester's marriage plans to Mr Mason in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1997: 78-79), which she also does in *Adèle* where her character gets further demonised as a serial killer of Antoinette, Grace and almost Jane as well.

As it also concerns a minor character and is set in her home as well as in England, *Adèle* is comparable to *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Although not followed by a detailed analysis, the claim that this centring of the "other" "serves to remedy *Jane Eyre*'s inherent xenophobia" (Schaff 2007: 30) not only describes the Rhys text but also appears to stand for the Tennant novel in many ways. Firstly, by way of reversing English prejudices against the French, as addressed by Adèle, for example, after the furious Rochester has ruined their furniture: "This shocking display of emotion – smashed conservatory and all – must warn my mother finally of the unsuitability of allowing an Englishman into her home" (Tennant 2003: 25). Secondly, by way of Adèle's reaction to her dislocation that echoes Antoinette's concerns with her identity and home in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Not knowing where her mother is and

⁹³ Similarly to *Adèle*, in Boylan's version discussed above Rochester also gets involved in a duel in Paris where he goes back after his marriage with Jane to continue his adventures with women and this is how he eventually meets his death.

refused to be acknowledged as his child by her father, standing on the trapeze of a Paris circus she ponders: “Who was I now? When I began to fly, would I realise I had no identity I could call my own?” (174). Once she learns about her mother’s death and is urged by her helpers to go home, she becomes clueless and disoriented: “So... ‘Where should I go back to?’ I shouted like the angry child I still knew myself to be. ‘Where is my home?’” (193), but contrary to Antoinette, she finally finds her home at their old lodgings where she both discovers her mother’s grave and makes peace with her father, Rochester.

Despite the happy ending for both Adèle and Jane, Thornfield Hall seems to be full of neglected, abandoned or imprisoned women: Bertha the locked-in wife, Adèle the rejected bastard, Mrs Fairfax the cousin servant, Jane the orphaned governess and other oppressed servants like Grace. The fate of these women similarly to those of Helen Burns, Miss Temple, St. John and Jane’s other cousins of *Jane Eyre* are waiting to be written up. So far, as I discussed in the above analyses, Grace, Miss Temple and Mrs Fairfax have been touched upon in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Charlotte* and *Adèle*. The same process of fictionalising each character’s perspective is already happening in the case of Jane Austen’s novels: author Amanda Grange, for example, plans to devote individual diary novels to the figures in *Pride and Prejudice* (“Enduring Love” 2007: 14-15), by which she will probably secure a steady income and career as a best-selling novelist for the coming decades. Likewise, Emma Tennant has become famous as a literary adaptor revising classic texts by Robert Louis Stevenson, Jane Austen and Emily Brontë. These engagements appear to spring as much from critical dissatisfaction with the historical works as from a readerly desire wanting to keep the encountered protagonists and their narrative worlds alive (Budra and Schellenberg 1998: 8). As it emerges from this description, a proliferating adaptation industry is being built on supplying versions or endings of *Jane Eyre* that are coded in Jane’s narrative. These refashionings are based on the close connection of academic criticism and popular readership that, as argued in Chapter 2.1, post-Victorian fiction is prognosticated to incite.

Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair*⁹⁴ constitutes a curious in-between as far as the ending of the Victorian novel is concerned: it rewrites and confirms it at the same time. Like *Charlotte*, this novel has a strong twentieth-century plotline, which in this case dominates the plot and constitutes the perspective from where the *Jane Eyre*-commentary emerges as well. As it slowly turns out, the original ending of the Brontë text was that, as phrased by a dissatisfied American tourist at Haworth museum, "she agrees to go with this drippy St. John Rivers guy but not to marry him, they depart for India and that's the end of the book? [...] I get the feeling from what she wrote that she just kinda pooped out" (Fforde 2003a: 65). Thus Fforde offers the St. John-choice as closure but immediately rejects it as well, reasoning that this plot resolution would have been just as disillusioning as the romance one for causing a similar feeling about the writer's cheap solution in this case of losing patience and opting out. Instead, as it gets voiced in *The Eyre Affair* many times, the audience of the Brontë novel yearns for a romance ending and since they have not got it, they feel cheated. Rochester also dislikes this ending and asks the protagonist, a female detective of the 1980s called Thursday Next who is able to contact the hero through time travel, to adjust it to one where he and Jane are happily married. She does this by numerous interferences with the historical text, which also serve as explanations for various supernatural scenes: Jane and Rochester's first meeting caused by the strange behaviour of the latter's horse is provoked by Thursday and she is also responsible for producing the telepathic call alluring Jane back to Thornfield. To sum up, in *The Eyre Affair*, another ending is temporarily toyed with, disapproved and then discarded to reassert the actual ending of the Victorian text, paradoxically as a second hand one.

The endings of the two other main texts in the chain of adaptations discussed in this chapter are also worth a brief survey to see how their plot resolutions diverge from that of the Brontë text. Interpreting the ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a controversial process. Firstly, as pointed out in the Chapter 2.1, any adaptation invites a double reading,

⁹⁴ This novel is analysed in detail in the next chapter, here it only receives attention with respect to its adjustments to the ending of *Jane Eyre*. *The Eyre Affair* features so prominently in my dissertation because it acutely marks the post-Victorian phenomenon both by being an inventive adaptation of a Victorian classic and by providing an intriguing example of how the contemporary novel sequel interrogates the connections of literary production and reception. A wide range of issues gets addressed in this text from authorship and celebrity culture and their relations with literary value and originality to social, political and cultural issues the UK faces today. All these aspects receive attention in my work, so Fforde's novel presents an important source.

especially those which do not distort the plotline of their source text but inform it from alternative perspectives. In the case of the Rhys novel we need to add the ending of *Jane Eyre* reporting Bertha's death to be able to decipher *Wide Sargasso Sea* as well, otherwise the Antoinette/Bertha story is left unfinished. Secondly, even if we do so, the evaluation of the revengeful and suicidal nature of this last act of putting Thornfield on fire remains hotly debated. Aided by one of its working titles, *The Ghost*, some critics, reading the novel as an experiment in evoking an authentic experience of madness (Oates 2006: 195), an exploration of hereditary tendencies of madness researched in Victorian psychology (Vrettos 2005: 77), or even paranoia (Shaffer 2006: 118), regard Antoinette/Bertha's final move as an act of madness. The writer herself seems to support this view in an autobiographical remark in one of her letters to Francis Wyndham, claiming that such an ending is quite possible since she, Jean Rhys also living England can easily imagine becoming mad (Wyndham-Melly 1984: 277). Other critics mostly distance themselves from associating the heroine with the concept of madness, either by slackening the verdict or by strongly refusing it. Madorossian provides an overview of their various readings: Antoinette's suicide can be seen as a reinforcement of the impossibility of transcending racial boundaries; as her assertive gesture of identification towards the black Creole community (2005: 158); or, on the contrary, as a logical outcome of her passivity and defeat lacking any positive gesture of self-assertivity (156). Su appears to combine these approaches, claiming that, on the one hand, Antoinette's nostalgic reflection does not provide an alternative to her fate in *Jane Eyre* but helps to show that that fate is inescapable (2005: 62), on the other hand, this escapist approach leads her to recast the past and utopistically reunite with Tia through a suicide leap in her dream, which leads to the recognition of her self and location triggering this act of resistance to colonial narratives when she wakes up (88-89 and 190-191). This interpretation, describing the ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as logical, utopistic and reactionary at the same time, indicates its complex and contradictory nature.

To complicate the matter further, even if Jean Rhys makes it clear in her correspondence that her heroine kills herself after burning the house (Wyndham-Melly 1984: 297) and most critics are in accord with this view (Stoneman 1996: 184, Sanders 2006: 103), some quite correctly underline that the novel has a life on its own, too. It is pointed out that, since the sentence "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (Rhys 1968:

152) is in the present tense with no definite indication of Antoinette's next step thus also including the possibility of her escape, the ending can also be read as an open one (Sanders 2006: 104, Su 2005: 191). Therefore, even if most critics and adaptations generally assume the heroine's death, on the basis of the narrative, the story may still be continued. Similarly to the reactions to the ending of *Jane Eyre*, the questionable ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* has also provoked fictional revisions in addition to the above-discussed critical reflections. In one of these, *Charlotte*, rewriting both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the aspect of madness gets emphasised. In Miranda's first revision of the Victorian text Bertha is a manic depressive who commits suicide by jumping off a cliff and in her second version the same character seems to reappear as a ghost when Grace's face making love to Rochester becomes Bertha's. In contrast, in *Adèle* Bertha features as a more harmless figure onto which other characters readily project their problems: Grace perceives herself imprisoned and little Adèle rejected like Bertha. The real cause of Bertha's death slowly emerges towards the end of the novel as a result of juxtaposing various narratives: Adèle blames herself for having assisted in Bertha's suicide because she did not let Bertha inside when she found her on the rooftop before the fire broke out; according to the official story of the villagers Bertha jumped out of the window during the fire (which is the closest to the solutions offered by *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*); finally Mrs Fairfax reveals that she murdered Bertha much earlier than the fire incident, and during the fire she dressed up the drunken Grace in Bertha's clothes and pushed her out of the window.

If *Wide Sargasso Sea* requires a double reading, *Charlotte* invites a multiple one, since it integrates aspects of the Brontë- and the Rhys text as well as possessing a double plot with a strong twentieth-century storyline which also functions as a rephrasing of the earlier novels. In this sense Thomas's work proves a perfect example of the retrospective novelistic refraction introduced in Chapter 2.2 at the same time rewriting and reconstructing canonical texts, in the process of which it is not only old texts that are renovating the new ones but vice versa as well. Onega and Gutleben argue that eventually D. M. Thomas's novel with all its closures and definite answers presents itself as more Victorian than its nineteenth-century predecessor (as well as its early-twentieth-century one, we may add), which, in turn, with all its ambiguities and uncertainties appear(s) more postmodern (2004: 11). Indeed, in *Charlotte* all major Victorian characters die, except for Bertha and Rochester's son, the newly invented Robert Rochester in the West Indies whose

letter closes the book. It is from this correspondence that the identity of Rochester's ward is revealed: Adèle turns out to be Bertha and Rochester's second child who, since her father did not want her, had to be removed to France and was pronounced his love child with a French actress. Besides indicating the possibilities Charlotte Brontë did not write, all these unwanted and hidden children also echo Miranda's traumatic abortion as well as her new pregnancy after her visit to Martinique not knowing who the father of her child is. The result of letting these characters survive marks, on the one hand, the author's aggressiveness of tying up loose ends and closing possibilities for continuing the major nineteenth-century plotline, on the other hand, his opening the potential for a sequelised recounting of the stories of the new generation.

As *Charlotte* has a complex subplot continuing the Victorian story, it is worth looking into the exploitation of nineteenth-century characters from a twentieth-century perspective, especially concerning their fate. Though more realistic in terms of her marriage with Rochester and occasionally funny revealing her ignorance concerning sexuality, Jane's narrative remains mostly uninteresting. She experiences her sexual liberation with Robert, instructs him in English ways, tries to learn his colonial ways and finally dies of tropical fever without learning crucial facts about Edward Rochester's past or accommodating to life on the colonies. Except for Boylan's ending where her self-narrated fate is more intriguing and uncertain, Jane remains marginal in the three other texts discussed here. She does not get a voice in any of them: *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Adèle* focus on other characters while keeping her in the background and in *The Eyre Affair* she simply gets abducted from the novel. Rochester, on the other hand, seems to have activated the imagination of most adaptors. He receives the most sympathetic treatment in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Adèle* in both of which he is accorded a narrative voice thus given an opportunity to provide his perspective of the events at the end of which he most probably finds his destiny in the promise of a happy marriage with Jane conforming to the closing of *Jane Eyre*. However, his potential as a womaniser becomes revealed even in these texts, not to mention the others where he falls victim to his male pride: in Boylan's he is killed in a duel, while in *Charlotte* he falls off a horse. These two texts also unmask his psychosexual games, followed by the abandonment of the exploited women as well as their children. The most powerful figure Rochester cuts materialises in *The Eyre Affair*, where he is capable of altering the nineteenth-century narrative through contacting the twentieth-century plotline

and even though he comes from the previous century, he knows things in advance, is able to retain Thursday in the historical setting or influence her life in the future as well as entertain tourists at Thornfield to keep it economically adrift. This way not only are his ventriloquising qualities magnified but he also assumes the identity of a financially self-conscious entrepreneur.

There have been attempts to organise *Jane Eyre* adaptations in order to establish some kind of relationship among the ever-growing number of texts engaging with the novel. Patsy Stoneman's *Brontë Transformations: The Cultural Dissemination of 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights'* (1996) has proved a seminal work in this respect exhaustively documenting and summarising reactions to the Victorian text from within a few years of its publication until the mid-1990s. Apart from some classic refashionings also addressed by Stoneman, a more recent collection titled *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of 'Jane Eyre'* (2007) additionally includes twenty-first-century responses to the nineteenth-century novel. Stoneman's work is organised chronologically within which she separates thematic entities as well that contextualise the adaptations according to the critical and theoretical trends and movements of the last two centuries. The survey is appended by a chronological list of *Jane Eyre* (and *Wuthering Heights*) reproductions which are grouped according to adaptive genres with short comments indicating their relationship to the Victorian text(s). Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, editing the 2007 anthology, organise the essays according to representational media with individual sections for fiction, films and paintings, and stage adaptations. Within each subdivision incidental thematic sections emerge as well, which in the case of the novels means some chronology (*Wide Sargasso Sea* analyses precede *The Eyre Affair* ones) and that papers concerning particular texts are published consecutively.

The two collections complement each other. Stoneman's is a useful diachronic account highlighting historical tendencies in responding to *Jane Eyre* with the practicality of the appendix providing an encyclopaedic source.⁹⁵ Rubik and Mettinger-Schartmann's assists

⁹⁵ It can be learnt from this collection, for example, that, as a Hungarian academic from Debrecen discovered, there was a Hungarian production of the novel, probably after a 1870 New York stage adaptation, *The Orphan of Lowood*, which first appeared as a film (1920), was later made into a bowdlerized novel (1960s) and then translated (1990s) (Stoneman 1996: 265, 276, 287, respectively).

both in drawing attention to rewritings that have become important in the last ten years and in perceiving the forums and range of products simultaneously appearing at present. Neither of the books undertakes to argue a specific genealogy or organising principle among the refashionings. Being a pioneer in this endeavour, the first survey naturally assumes a more descriptive function, while the second assortment appears as a demonstration of the importance and popularity of the phenomenon rather than a scholarly account of any theoretical and methodological concern. One such concern could be the problem of terminology which influences the scope and conclusion such critical works may draw. Rubik and Mettinger-Schartmann remark in a footnote that although they are aware of the abundance of terms denoting and differentiating among responses to the Victorian text, due to the wide variety of interpretations they introduce, they have not synthesised the terminology (2007: 11). Stoneman reflects on the difficulty of finding the appropriate term for her project which is not only influenced by its historicity but also by the diversity of texts she has included:

Multiplied across genres and discourses, and across the one hundred and fifty years since the publication of the Brontë texts, the potential field becomes vast. Dissemination, moreover, is an unsystematic process which may take the form of almost exact reproductions (editions), versions in other media (stage plays, films), selective reproductions or versions (dramatised scenes, visual illustrations), parodies, allusions, structural parallels (which may not even mention the original text) and what Christopher Richards calls ‘incremental’ writings (sequels, prequels, etc.) (Richards, C. 1989) (1996: 3-4).

The critic maintains this terminological variety in her work, using the most appropriate for individual sections and texts and apparently opting for *derivatives* as the common denominator, which is also employed to denote the list of responses in the appendix. This abundance of terms scholars use indicates that the research area concerned with post-Victorian fiction is still in the making; however, I still think that it is important to determine terminological categories as exactly as possible, even if only for heuristic purposes, since they may point to more specific conclusions. For example, delimiting sequels as a specific group of texts prompted the connection of writing in instalments and changing reading habits in the previous two chapters.

I have so far discussed adaptations Stoneman would call *incremental literature* including prequels and sequels. In the final segment of this chapter I would like to concentrate on texts that have been omitted from or only mentioned but not properly analysed in these two collections concerned with the Brontë-afterlives despite their increasing relevance. As these texts are not directly related to *Jane Eyre*, terminologically they would come closest to the above category of *parodies*, *allusions* or *structural parallels*; however, since my concern here is rather thematic than generic, I focus on them as texts maintaining motif-based relationships with the Victorian source text. Some of these correspondences in post-Victorian novels have already been elaborated in the previous chapter and connected to the analysed adaptations in the course of this chapter, still they receive attention here too as indicators of areas of interest Brontë's novel triggered from the 1950s until the present possibly determining future engagements as well. Such motifs are the woman writer, the governess, the unmarried plain Jane and the relationship of identity, marriage and madness. The aim of this brief survey is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of possible motifs or texts the Victorian novel triggers, rather to focalise texts that have so far been largely excluded from discussions of *Jane Eyre* revisions in order to point out what interpretive tendencies they may offer.

Regarding Brontë and Jane's career, two occupations seem to be popular in texts resonating with *Jane Eyre*: the female author and the governess. Edith Hope (again a conceptual name), the protagonist of Anita Brookner's⁹⁶ Booker Prize-winning *Hotel Du Lac* (1984) refuses two marriage offers and rather sticks to her independent financial existence as a novelist writing romances, which may pass as a plausible ending for the Victorian novel as well. Contrary to her generic preference, Sugar in Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* aspires to become an angry novelist refusing Brontë's romance writing similarly to Bella/Victoria in Gray's *Poor Things*. Sugar, animated by her career aim to become a writer, moves up on the social ladder from a lower-class outcast working as a prostitute as far as the position of governess.⁹⁷ She becomes pregnant by her master, loses the child, and on learning that he wants to get rid of her because of all this, she steals his child and ends

⁹⁶ I am grateful to Tamás Bényei for the idea of connecting *Jane Eyre* with novels by Anita Brookner, Barbara Pym and V. S. Naipaul. Bényei also mentions some novels by Elisabeth Taylor as successful *Jane Eyre* adaptations (2003a: 128 footnote 11) which are not discussed here but are worth noting.

⁹⁷ Bényei reads such emblematic female figures of the Victorian novel as the prostitute, the madwoman and the governess as ones that dissolve into one at a deeper textual level (2006: 28).

up as an outcast again. It seems then that instead of becoming an angry novelist she becomes an angry character only living the life she was planning to write up; however, the fact that the ending is left open leaves space for her reaching her writerly aspirations as well. Bella/Victoria develops into a writer as the novel *Poor Things* progresses and beside her diary also recording her nervous breakdown we get to read her letter discrediting the previous narrator for being too Victorian as quoted in Chapter 1.1.

The notion of plainness (on some occasions paired with the occupation of being a governess) seems to closely accompany authorship. Edith expresses awareness of her status as an unmarried plain intellectual woman in her early forties, Sugar is described as a prostitute taken for a lady due to her dress code despite her always dry mouth and Bella/Victoria fights similar social constraints: “If you ignore the Gainsborough hat and pretentious nickname it shows I am a plain, sensible woman, not the naïve Lucrezia Borgia and La Belle Dame Sans Merci described in the text” (Gray 2002: 251). In Sugar’s case being a governess functions as an occupation parallel to becoming a writer, and though we never learn what happens to her novel, she definitely fails as a governess as she cannot speak languages or play the piano. Lucy sent abroad with the hope of making money as a governess in Jones’s *Sixty Lights* likewise causes disappointment to her employers as she is not well-educated, too young and pregnant by the time she arrives at her destination. In both of these texts the idea of governess seems mocked as an impossible status with expectations that are no longer tenable.

An interesting twentieth-century reiteration of the governess motif could be the concept of the excellent woman Mildred Lathbury embodies in Barbara Pym’s *Excellent Women* (1952). She admittedly lives the lives of other people maybe even preferring them to her own and has the important social function of making cups of tea as she is reminded by one of her male friends, so she interiorises this perception of her person with humour and thinks “[w]ell, there was nothing to be done about it now but to make one” (1952: 222). She is busy monitoring malfunctional marriages or would-be marriages of her fellow-parishioners and not expected to marry herself, as excellent women are not supposed to get

married so that other people can keep on using her services.⁹⁸ Mildred also confesses to her plainness but she underlines that she looks different from *Jane Eyre* (7). The text also resonates with the Victorian novel concerning its setting which is a quiet small parish in the country and there are practically no time references, so the only clues that give away the story as a twentieth-century one are its language and some contextual information. The same is true for Brookner's text where the plot takes place in one big house like Thronfield Hall, a hidden hotel in the countryside which is a place of residence for lonely women who are either unmarried or live in unhappy marriages.

A recurring subject in fictionalising female identity is the issue of naming. On the one hand, names like Lucy Strange of *Sixty Lights* correspond to Jane Eyre as far as the surname is concerned, both assuming a distanced perspective on the world, the former being out of the ordinary, the latter spiritual or ethereal. Likewise, the protagonist of *Emma Brown* bearing the most common name possible could be associated with the plain Jane motif she embodies. Similarly clever, rebellious, individualistic and locked into a dark attic room for her renitence, Emma practically relives Jane's childhood. As she is also an orphan, she keeps standing in front of the mirror trying to figure out her name and identity. On the other hand, naming is closely connected to marriage. There are quite a few not exactly happily married Janes, such as the one in Pym's *Jane and Prudence* (1953) or in Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall* (1969), whose lives are comparable to the Victorian heroine's. And then there are the ones who are renamed by their husband after the marriage and thus given an alternative identity they do not necessarily agree with: in the habit of Antoinette rechristened as Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Isa becomes Belle in *Emma Brown*, Victoria is called Bella in *Poor Things* and Miranda acquires many names in *Charlotte*.

This threat to or eventual loss of women's identity through marriage leading to possible madness is also addressed in these texts. In *Sixty Lights* Lucy's mother identifies with Jane while single and feels like a madwoman once she is married. In *The Crimson Petal and the White* as well as in *Poor Things* the husbands want to send their wives to an asylum for their unnatural sexual desires and the resulting aggression. Agnes, the wife of the hero in

⁹⁸ She puts up with this position due to the lack of a suitable partner at least in this novel, as there is a reference in Pym's next novel, *Jane and Prudence* (1953) to Mildred actually having got married (125-126).

Faber's novel identifies with Bertha of *Jane Eyre* at the same time as attempting to fight her sexual longing, depression and accusations of madness like Antoinette does in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Clara, Agnes's maid secretly accuses the husband, William Rackham to be the cause of her mistress's problems, refusing to identify her as mad thus echoing Grace Poole's opinion of Antoinette's state of health in the Rhys novel. Finally, Agnes finds Clara reading the novel *Jane Eyre*, recognises it as a book she herself has read against the instructions of her doctor, and is concerned about her maid reading such a book: "To see this dog-eared volume in Clara's possession gives Agnes a chill, for there's something wicked about a lady's-maid savouring this horrid tale of a wife driven mad by illness and shut up in a tower by her husband while he attempts to marry another woman" (Faber 2003: 473-4). The way she summarises the contents of the novel implying the plot she finds herself in at the same time, however, more than implies *Wide Sargasso Sea*: the focus is on Bertha's life and the actions of her husband, whereas Jane, the narrator and protagonist of the Brontë novel is not even named only referred to as "another woman."

The above example of *The Crimson Petal and the White* proves how much the Victorian text, *Jane Eyre* and its pioneering postcolonial, post-Victorian adaptation, *Wide Sargasso Sea* intertwine in later rewritings. Similarly, in *Poor Things* there are actual manifestations of the supposed madness of female characters echoing both the child Jane in *Jane Eyre* and the locked in Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Such instances are when Bella/Victoria bites into one of her fellow-traveller's hand which results in a proper bleeding wound that has to be treated and when clenches her teeth and fists scorning men who only talk about poverty but do not undertake any action to combat it. In Jones's *Mister Pip* Mr Watt's second wife is called Grace who is a native islander just like Bertha in the Rhys text who is often mixed up with Grace in *Jane Eyre*. There are plenty of postmodern texts intermingling not only *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* but also *Wuthering Heights*. Many of these texts are mentioned by Stoneman (1996) and also feature in Miller's *The Brontë Myth* (2002) and definitely constitute a worthwhile research subject for those further interested in motif analysis.

Chapter 4. The Future of the Post-Victorian Novel: Indications of Topic and Genre

“ ‘Well, you know these writers. They'll steal any...’ And her voice trailed off as she looked down at her trembling hands.

‘Anything, that's right.’ He leant back in his chair, and smiled benevolently in her general direction. ‘It's called the anxiety of influence.’...

‘And of course it must be true of novelists, too.’ She paused, and licked her lips. ‘No doubt,’ she went on, ‘there are resemblances between my books and those of other writers.’ ”

Peter Ackroyd, *Chatterton* (1987)

As a subgenre of historical fiction, the post-Victorian novel is mostly engaged in issues of the production and consumption of historical knowledge and since it is at the same time concerned with the nineteenth, the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, it acutely depicts the process of acquiring this knowledge as a series of historical experiences. Accordingly, novelistic refashionings of the nineteenth century reflect different ideological processes at work in interpretations of historical persona and texts, fact and fiction or political, social and ethical historical legacies. The generic implications of these rewritings are also far-reaching: apart from the observable hybridity of genres typical of the postmodern, post-Victorian novels prioritise certain types of fiction thereby both reinforcing and revising Victorian topoi and novelistic conventions. This focus on genre also emerges in critical literature. Earlier collections surveying post-Victorian fiction, such as John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff's *Victorian Afterlife* (2000) or Christian Gutleben's *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001), were organised around the paradox of novels mystifying and subverting Victorianism influenced by modernist and postmodernist tenets. I introduced such interconnections largely following the diachronic principle of the historical temporality of adaptations in Chapters 2 and 3. Recent publications discussing the subject, however, like Christian Gutleben and Susana Onega's *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary British Literature and Film* (2004), Cora Kaplan's *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (2007) or the thematic issues of NVS, orient their analysis more along the lines of genre. Following this critical move, in the present chapter I explore current thematic and generic trends in a more synchronic manner. In contrast to the specific focus of the last chapter on one Victorian source text and its rewritings across centuries, in the

following various novels that have reworked nineteenth-century authors, topics and works within one genre in the course of the last (two) decade(s) receive attention.

My survey constitutes an inquiry into how concerns with authorship, biography and originality as well as with postcolonial, postimperial and (post)feminist identities addressed in post-Victorian fiction translate into generic preferences. First, I highlight the prevalence of biofiction by scrutinizing the Henry James-novels published in 2004 and the ongoing series of authorial and critical responses to these works. Through the evolving chain of texts tackling the processes of (re)writing and (re)reading as well as questions of literary production and reception, I explore how the fictionalisation of historical authors and their art influences attitudes to authorship and literary biographies. Second, I theorise the subgeneric category of island fiction to contextualise inventive attempts at expressing how Britain faces legacies of its historical empire. I scrutinise novels that engage with the concepts of insularity, travel and home from (post)imperial and (post)colonial perspectives, such as Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000) and Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991). Third, introduced by a survey on Dickensiana and based on the case study of Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001), I analyse the revival of the novel sequel exhibiting an intriguing generic hybridity. I examine how the *Jane Eyre* adaptation creatively engages with issues of the literary marketplace, how the rewriting of fictional texts affects the originality debate and readership and how the novel's socio-political concerns are addressed. I do not aim to provide a systematic categorical analysis in terms of topic and genre, rather I indicate governing tendencies of attention both in the production and the reception of post-Victorian fiction prognosticating the proliferation of novels prioritising biofiction, island fiction and the novel sequel integrating detective, science, utopian and dystopian fiction as well.

4.1 Biographical Novel

As already argued in Chapter 2.1, at present we experience the return of the author on many levels: the author as celebrity, the author as the responsible creator of a literary text and authorship as a concept to be readdressed by literary criticism. This renewed attention to the author results in recentring and increasingly involving the author as a public figure in the literary market, renewing discourses of authority, authenticity, anxiety and cult. This

also brings the genre of literary biographies to attention providing an important hallmark of how the historical dimension of empirical realities, social, political and ethical questions becomes refocused in the creative realm, explained by scholars as a returning belief in the liberal humanist subject (Kaplan 2007: 79).⁹⁹ The gradual rise of authorship to a central determinant of the novel's literary value in the nineteenth century resurfaces in today's interest in reputations and status of worth for literary authors as celebrities (Deane 2003: ix-xvi, English and Frow 2006: 39-57), which can also be observed in most post-Victorian biographophilia of the eighties and nineties. These reconstructions of nineteenth-century writers quite clearly distinguish between the authors' life and work, questioning the myths, both positive and negative, surrounding the former and mostly maintaining praise for the latter.¹⁰⁰ Thomas Hardy's chauvinism as in Howard Jacobson's *Peeping Tom* (1984) or Emma Tennant's *Tess* (1993), and Oscar Wilde's homosexuality as in Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983) featured among the popular topics fictionalised. Peter Ackroyd specialises in writing fictional biographies of historical authors, his most famous one overarching three centuries and providing the source of mottoes for the chapters of this dissertation being *Chatterton* (1987) and his most monumental being *Dickens* (1990), labelled as "Ackroyd's melodrama of Victorian authorship" (Kaplan 2007: 62). Julian Barnes, another author expressing interest in literary biographies, voices concerns related to the critical construction of historical authors in his *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) already, to further engage with them in his massive *Arthur and George* (2005). Considering the cultic status of authors in the Victorian era, I think that the post-Victorian rewriting of nineteenth-century authors could also be read as a symbolic move of restating authorship.

After this period of reviving or debunking scandals around Victorian authors, a certain shift of interest takes place towards the author's life and character in connection with the

⁹⁹ The increasing theoretical interest in (re)defining the subject and subjectivity has perhaps also assisted in its return to (discussions about) literature. An example for such a debate is Deborah Knight and Toril Moi's in the mid-nineties (Knight 1995: 39-56, Moi 1995: 57-62, Knight 1995: 63-70). What emerges from their dialogue is not only the necessity to revisit the critical terminology related to the subject, but the existence of a direct connection between subjectivity and "the popularity of all kinds of biographies, letters, and diaries" as well, which Moi establishes (60) and Knight agrees with (69). I am grateful to Akos I. Farkas for calling my attention to the above critical exchange.

¹⁰⁰ I am grateful to Ferenc Takács for adding Thomas Shapcott's *White Stag of Exile* (1984) to the list of novels with English cultural relevancies to follow. This text adapts a nineteenth-century Hungarian art collector and artist's biography, that of Károly Pulszky.

writing process itself. The proliferation of Henry James-biographilia provides a representative twenty-first-century example of this change. In the late-Victorian era this writer fought the contemporary trend of subordinating authorial principles to mass-market consumerism by constructing “an authoritative image of his integrity and mastery” (Deane 2003: xiv), manifest in the scant focus on social and political themes as well as in presenting more self-reflexive forms of authorial consciousness (xv). In his seminal essay *Technique as Discovery*, the new critic Mark Schorer already defines the modern novelist as someone who rigorously peruses his medium and thereby discovers his subject matter, referring to James as a perfect example for this (Schorer 1972: 392). This view of the historical author prevails today as the following remark of one of his adaptors shows: “we after-comers nevertheless venerate James for the uncompromising subtlety and technical refinement of his writing. He was the first English novelist to insist on fiction-writing as an exacting art, the technique of which was available to scrutiny and analysis” (Heyns “The Curse of Henry James” 2004). Moreover, the postmodern adaptations surveyed in the following constitute a corpus written in a similar spirit of “the portrait of the artist”-type novels discussing the artist, art and artistry.

Why so many works appear on the same author is a question open for speculation. It is commonly accepted that James’s aversion to making his life public, even resorting to burning evidence, was sooner or later bound to excite some interest in his life and inspire attempts to fictionalise it (Kramer “The Secrets of the Master” 2008). Some even claim that “[a] biographer himself, James tried to control his biography through the selective destruction of evidence” (Rollyson “James & the Zeitgeist” 2005). Another well known example of such a playful attitude to his personal data and his novels would be Anthony Burgess, whose “tendencies to fictionalise his life and indeed to ransack his fiction for his autobiography” as Ákos I. Farkas argues, makes the task of his biographers rather difficult (2006: 317). Or to take a biofictional example, Flaubert’s case in Barnes’s novel is reflected on in the same way when the narrator sees the parrot, starting off his biographical inquiry:

I gazed at the bird, and to my surprise felt ardently in touch with this writer who disdainfully forbade posterity to take any personal interest in him. His statue was retread; his house has been knocked down; his books naturally had

their own life – responses to them weren't responses to him. But here, in this unexceptional green parrot, preserved in a routine yet mysterious fashion, was something which made me feel I had almost known the writer. (1990: 16).

These comments illustrate how critics and writers wholeheartedly participate in such postmodern gap filling exercises. Researchers also explain the rising interest in turning Henry James's life into fiction as a possible consequence of the reinvigorating scholarship on James, maintaining that contemporary practices focus on the subject and its current narratives of identification, which inspires life-writing (Kaplan 2007: 64). More specifically, they argue that biographical novels have directly developed out of the scholarship rethinking James's social contacts, especially his personal attachments to men and women (Saunders 2008: 123). Critical analyses such as Eric Haralson's *Henry James and Queer Modernity* (2003) illustrate James's relevance for recent theoretical discourses and disciplines, for example, queer theory or gender studies. This transgressiveness does not only manifest itself in the author's uncertain sexual preferences and national or cultural belonging, but also in his in-betweenness of two literary historical eras: the Victorian and the modernist.¹⁰¹ Even if he mainly wrote in the tradition of the modernist psychological novel, James still adhered to some kind of Victorian moral imperative in his art, which yields an intriguing combination for today's authors. Besides embodying a fruitful subject matter for current discourses of fluidity, "he also presents himself as a model: not for imitation or copying, but of an artistic ideal" (Heyns "The Curse of Henry James" 2004). In this survey, his crisis as a writer in the 1890s receives central attention through the discussion of twenty-first-century adaptations. Thus he fits into the post-Victorian category whose nineteenth-century point of reference, as already pinned down in the first chapter, I understand as a chronological one.

By the year 2004, five novels featuring Henry James had been lining up for literary acclaim: the paperback edition of *Felony: The Private History of The Aspern Papers* (2002) by Emma Tennant, Colm Tóibín's *The Master* (2004), Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004), David Lodge's *Author Author* (2004) and Michiel Heyns's *The*

¹⁰¹ For a detailed analysis of putting Henry James into a literary historical context see Sergio Perosa's "The Case of Henry James: From Victorianism to the Avant-Garde" (Ickringill and Mills Eds. 1992: 61-77).

Typewriter's Tale (2005).¹⁰² *Felony* was ahead of time, so in that respect it did not participate in the competition; publishers rejected *The Typewriter's Tale* because of a simultaneous overproduction of similar projects; and the other three all qualified for the Man Booker Prize of the year, *Author Author* not entering the long list, *The Master* making it to the shortlist and *The Line of Beauty* eventually winning the prize. These novels not only correspond in their time of appearance, but also in their topic indicated already by the titles. None of them actually names Henry James as a major character or point of reference, but they all relate to writing, Hollinghurst's text associable with painting as well. Besides some of them echoing the Victorian precursor's own pieces, the use of words like *author*, *master*, *typewriter*, *papers*, *line*, *history*, and *tale* illustrates a preoccupation with authorship, the authority of author and text as well as the life and art of storytelling, which serves as a nominal basis for most of the adaptations albeit their respective foci described in the following.

"*Felony* is about the misdemeanours inherent in writing – theft, false memory, plagiarism and greed for celebrity"—declares the blurb of the novel's first hardcover edition, setting the context for reading as well as articulating a critical interest in the process of writing. The appropriative chain with Emma Tennant researching into the nineteenth-century Henry James inquiring into eighteenth-century Romantic texts gives an ironic twist to the Victorian author's fear and disgust of upcoming generations interfering with his private life. This anxiety is further ridiculed by making James a mouthpiece for warning celebrities with dubious lives to beware of future publications of their scandals (Tennant 2002: 8) and by the fact that he carries out the same notorious research for his *Aspern Papers* on Romantic poets that his future biographer does on him. The figure of Henry James in *Felony* is read as a thief who does not refrain from any kind of stealing to be able to write his story (Rollyson "James & the Zeitgeist" 2005). From the perspective of James's authoress friend, Constance Fenimore Woolson, who gets a share of the narrative, this critique is carried further contrasting the writer's supreme artistic achievement with his life as an undecided bachelor insensitive to the needs of those closest to him. She remembers a

¹⁰² Henry James inspired numerous other novels both prior and after 2004, such as Carol de Chellis Hill's *Henry James's Midnight Song* (1993), Kathryn Kramer's *Sweet Water* (1998), Edmund White's *Hotel de Dream* (2007), Cynthia Ozick's *Dictation* (2008) and *Foreign Bodies* (2010) and Paula Marantz Cohen's *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper* (2010), which prove the nineteenth-century author's ongoing oeuvre.

conversation overhearing him say that women write very badly, so she begins to suspect that he may not only be unable to understand women but specifically dislike women who write (Tennant 2002: 158-9). This point of view provides a more critical opinion not only of James's talents as a writer, but also of his general ethical stance towards his sources and his female colleagues. Along the lines of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's reinterpretation of Harold Bloom's notion of the "anxiety of influence" attributed to male poets, as an "anxiety of authorship" experienced by female poets,¹⁰³ a feminist reading of Tennant's text could be developed that tackles aspects of this anxiety.

A male author devoting his life to high art who features as the main character in James's *The Lesson of the Master* and gets compared to the nineteenth-century author himself in *Felony*, has also provided a source of inspiration for Tóibín's *The Master*. Published in February 2004, this work constitutes the next item in the chronology of Henry James-biographilia. Tóibín gives a convincing portrait of how the author's focus on other people's lives that yield promising stories affects his own life and relationships. The subject of appropriating source material already addressed in *Felony* reappears here as intellectual theft, the best example of which is James stealing and publishing a tale Edmund Gosse tells him. This leads to frictions and Gosse's "objections to the art of fiction as a cheap raid on the real and the true" (Tóibín 2005: 76), which basically amounts to James's humiliation with his own weapon. Critics also claim that this exclusive concentration on his fictional characters leaves no space for the articulation of the author's own desires: James behaves evasively in his conversations and does not appear more accessible for his own private self than for others (Rollyson "James & the Zeitgeist" 2005), which obviously results in loneliness. Due to the sensitive picturing of these vital conflicts interweaving James's life and art, *The Master* usually receives praise for its psychological richness, characterised as "a lovely portrait of the artist" (Cohen "The Quest for a Necessary Shell" 2004), the use of which category tunes in with these novels being *Künstlerromans*. Regarding the anxiety of authorship, especially in the case of an adaptor who has virtually moved into his predecessor's consciousness, one could agree with the observation that parallels James's

¹⁰³ Gilbert and Gubar (1984: 48-49). From this perspective Woolson's battle "is not against her (male) precursor's reading of the world but against his reading of *her*. In order to define herself as an author she must redefine the terms of her socialization" (49).

relationship to the dead determining the narrative of *The Master* with Tóibín's connection to James whom he ventriloquises (Saunders 2008: 131).

In his *The Line of Beauty*, which was published shortly after *The Master*, Alan Hollinghurst also ghost-writes the Victorian author. Lacking a nineteenth-century plotline and set in the 1980s gleam and gutter of Thatcherite Britain, the novel is yet denied the status of biofiction (Kaplan 2007: 74). Nevertheless, considering how nineteenth-century writers get transposed into contemporary settings in other types of post-Victorian fiction, I propose that *The Line of Beauty* is interpreted as a text expanding the boundaries of biofiction in the same way. Miranda in D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte*, for example, provisionally assumes the identity of Charlotte Brontë in the West-Indies, fantasising about the kind of life Brontë would have had in the twentieth century; or Mr Watts of Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* impersonates Charles Dickens in an equally postcolonial setting, interweaving his life story with that of Dickens's *Great Expectations*. These instances indicate alternative fates for historical authors, which imply further potentials in writing literary biographies. In this context, the protagonist of *The Line of Beauty*, a young homosexual reads as a bold twentieth-century impersonation of Henry James. Nick Guest habitually interweaves James-quotes with his own words, of which he perceives as a love affair with the historical author (Hollinghurst 2004: 208), and he often finds himself imitating James, for instance when dictating of long, complex sentences to his typist in his predecessor's fashion (396). The way Nick juxtaposes the discourse of his academic study on James with his sexual self-discovery and the interpretation of his own experiences in the light of Henry James's texts yields an intriguing recontextualisation of the Jamesian life-art dichotomy. Nick's failure in adapting James's *The Spoils of Poynton* into a popular film script drives him to the limits of artistic compromise, which constitutes another parallel between Nick and James concerning their attitude to artistic production during their brief career as playwrights. Not being able to compromise, Nick rather starts working on a magazine called *Ogee*, which he dedicates to beauty. Picking up on the moral duplicity of the ogee curve echoing the title's "line of beauty," James Wood draws a comparison between Hollinghurst and James's approach to aestheticism. The critic concludes that by such a connection of beauty and morality Hollinghurst's text "seems to be delivering itself of a critique only about the potential uses and abuses of aestheticism; whereas James suggests that aestheticism is intrinsically dangerous" (Wood "The Ogee Curve" 2004a). The fact

that such comparisons exist between the two writers emphasises the level of proximity the Man Booker Prize-winning author has achieved in this work to his Victorian predecessor in refashioning late-Victorian and early-modernist concerns.

David Lodge's *Author, Author* published as the last of the three new outputs in the autumn of 2004 could not escape comparison with the previously appearing novels. Critics generally regard it as the weakest of the three, accusing the writer of too closely following historical data (Harrison "The Portrait of a Layabout" 2004, Wood "The Spoils" 2004b). This kind of critical sensitivity implies an increasing concern with the generic differentiation between biography and biofiction, essential for the establishment of the latter as a distinct category. Similarly to *The Master*, *Author, Author* gives an account of James's crisis of authorship in his middle years, especially the failure of his play *Guy Domville*, but it focuses less on the loneliness of the artist split between his life and art and more on James's literary recognition, rejections and jealousies. Among his social connections those that also bear importance professionally, relating to the author's artistic production receive the most attention. For example, characterising his relationship to Constance Fenimore Woolson, Henry James admits that he communicates more easily and honestly through fiction than in real-life situations (Lodge 2005: 169). At the end of the book, Lodge's author enters the narrative in the shape of a literary critic and expresses his reverence for the master assuring him of his future as an "established classic, essential reading for anyone interested in modern English and American literature" (375). This intrusion further complicates *Author, Author* from the point of view of genre, because besides biography and fiction it also overtly includes literary criticism, resulting in an even more complex *hybrid form*.¹⁰⁴

Michiel Heyns's *The Typewriter's Tale*, rejected in the "year of Henry James" and published in 2005 only, exhibits a similar authorial consciousness of writing biofiction as Lodge's text. In this novel it is not the author but the narrator, James's secretary who appropriates the position of the writer and attempts to compile her own novel based on stolen material from her employer. Frieda Wroth, modelled on James's last typist Theodora Bosanquet, working in close proximity to the author like Fenimore in *Felony*, notes that

¹⁰⁴ Term taken from Saunders (2008: 126).

through his exclusive devotion to his art, James behaves in a largely insensitive way towards people around him, especially women: “he should lose himself in analyzing the structure of a story of a young woman affronting her destiny and disregard the daily presence of just such a young woman in his own house” (Heyns 2005: 76). He remains similarly unaware of Edith Wharton’s possible affair with his admired William Morton Fullerton which only surfaces through Frieda’s narrative mediation of James’s social contacts. Critics see her character as supplanting the readers hoping for some kind of real life experience or recognition behind the intriguing prose (Kramer “The Secrets of the Master” 2008). With various instances of theft, likewise addressed in the other adaptations, and the assumption of an authorial self, this readerly identification immerses with a quasi-authorial one. Karen Scherzinger points out that besides a general inquiry into authorship including the James-Frieda-Heyns appropriative chain, the novel also reveals a very apparent “fantasy of intimacy” with the historical author, not only by putting his textual originals to various uses, but also by employing mediums and telepathy to enhance sensual closeness to him (2008: 15-16).

This abundance of novels devoted to the same subject summoned a number of responses out of which the most interesting ones from the point of view of authorship are those articulated by some of the authors themselves. Writers on the losing side fostered a superstitious reading of the fate of these novels, suggesting that Henry James’s curse on anyone interfering with his private life came true (Michiel Heyns even titled his essay devoted to the subject “The Curse of Henry James”): literary biographers closely engaging with the historical author’s life experienced rejection or negative criticism (Heyns “The Curse of Henry James” 2004, Lodge 2006: 39). In his *The Year of Henry James: The Story of a Novel* (2006), recording the production and reception of *Author, Author*, David Lodge draws a parallel between James’s efforts, frustrations and pains of rejection and his own similar endeavours (54). His predecessor’s difficulty of preserving readership without compromising his literary aims was a consideration Lodge equally had to face when he switched from writing bestsellers serialised by television to creating *Author, Author*, a period novel about a celibate historical person in an elegiac tone (64).¹⁰⁵ Heyns takes this

¹⁰⁵ Lodge’s author-narrator criticises the use of the term bestsellers itself on the basis of its etymology in *Author, Author*, obviously a non-bestseller: he points out that this compound carries with it a confusion of quality and quantity, consequently one cannot have more than one bestseller (Lodge 2005: 326).

comparison further in his essay (parts of which Lodge also quotes in *The Year of Henry James*) by presenting “James’s lonely artistic integrity” as a model to his adaptors for dealing with such disappointments, as a “proof of a dedication that so much in the modern publishing industry conspires to discourage” (Heyns “The Curse of Henry James” 2004).

Though provoked by an unfortunate situation, Lodge’s follow-up book could serve as a first step towards an enquiry into the creative process of literary adaptation, the understanding of which Hutcheon regards an absolute necessity for the appreciation of the popularity of rewritings (2006: 107). In addition, this work offers a further means to investigate the return of the author I have again pointed out at the beginning of this subchapter. For the writer of *Author, Author*, the creative process centres on the joys of appropriating the nineteenth century, the research part of which also involves actual literary tourism. Such trips enable the writer to establish not only intertextual but also quasi-inspirational relationships by gaining insights through historical locations and objects. These, sometimes overlapping, visits¹⁰⁶ and the unexpected competition of the ensuing works result in a type of literary rivalry not unknown to James himself and also fictionalised in most of the adaptations.¹⁰⁷ Lodge’s account elaborates how authorial distress both with their subjects’ and their own conflicts of personal life and the creative process of writing emerges. Such conflicts sometimes make the twenty-first-century authors into the ghostwriters of their predecessor, which the writer-critic seems to interpret as one possible reason for the current popularity of biographilia, namely “a positive and ingenious way of coping with the ‘anxiety of influence’” (Lodge 2006: 10).¹⁰⁸ The motto of this chapter seems to echo this line of thought: though Harriet Scrope, a twentieth-century novelist who lives of plagiarising Victorian and other authors, participates in the conversation on anxiety and plagiarism with some frailty as “her voice trailed off as she

¹⁰⁶ Heyns recorded one of these visits in the course of which Tóibín, Lodge and Heyns all appeared at Lamb House for their research. This account sounds like a perfect first sentence of a Gothic novel: “Lamb House, James’s retreat from publicity and scandal and inquiry, had become the site of betrayal: the tower of art had been scaled, the enemy was within the walls. We defied the prohibitions of the man in order to bring tribute to the master” (Heyns “The Curse of Henry James” 2004).

¹⁰⁷ James’s rivalry with Constance Fenimore Woolson and George Du Maurier, both of whom were more successful during their lifetime than the author himself, is fictionalised in *Felony* and *Author, Author*, respectively.

¹⁰⁸ By rewriting Henry James as well as criticising this endeavour, Lodge confronts the anxiety of influence both as author and as critic. As the coiner of this notion, Harold Bloom argues “Poets misinterpretations of poems are more drastic than critics’ misinterpretations or criticism, but this is only a difference in degree and not at all in kind” (Bloom 2001: 1804).

looked down at her trembling hands” (Ackroyd 1987: 100), her attitude to appropriating earlier writers’ work suggests that she accepts it as a perfectly natural behaviour: “No doubt,” she went on, “there are resemblances between my books and those of other writers” (101). Charles Wychwood, her partner in the dialogue accepts this view without objections, he even expands it in his preface to the book he writes on Chatterton: “Thomas Chatterton believed that he could explain the entire material and spiritual world in terms of imitation and forgery, and so sure was he of his own genius that he allowed it to flourish under other names” (126).

Besides the authorial reactions, critical responses to the Henry James-adaptations also mark telling sites of current engagements with biographical fiction. Kaplan, for example, reads three of the above five texts, *The Master*, *Author, Author*, and *The Line of Beauty* with a focus on anxieties connected to masculinity, writing and authorship, concluding that the past and present exposure of these leads to the recognition of “a more paradoxical and contradictory masculine – and literary – subjectivity” (2007: 78). This view provides an important critical angle to the authors’ self-reflexive comments on the anxiety of authorship. Max Saunders suspects a potential narcissistic drive behind fictional recreations of the dead author, whereby contemporary writers create their own authorial persona through engaging with similar concerns of their nineteenth-century predecessor (2008: 127). This assumption sounds plausible considering that James’s contested biography yields a perfect locus for the projection of various authorial sensibilities. Lodge’s, for example, invites comments on the basis of the title of his work, *Author, Author*, as one that aims for a cohabitation of the author position (Scherzinger 2008: 10), leading to the conclusion that adaptations of such kind will trigger a change in literary criticism toward “a participatory collaboration of reading, writing, theory and [...] scholarship” (19-20). The above discussed authorial and critical reactions not only emphasise collaborative authorship introduced in Chapter 2.1 and exemplified in the discussion of *Jane Eyre* adaptations in Chapter 3 as well as in the case study of *The Eyre Affair* below, but also aptly show how the genre of biofiction and literary criticism are in the making through their interaction concerning the writing process, life and writing, representations of life and writing, literary reception and reactions to literary reception, increasingly collapsing the boundaries of text and critique in the process.

On the basis of the above, it can be expected that the literary agency of authors and authors as fictional characters becomes more extensively explored in the future. Barnes's *Arthur and George* (2005) marks a longish example of such an exploration, where a parallel account of the lives and interaction of George Edalji, a wrongly sentenced Parsee solicitor and Arthur Conan Doyle, the renowned writer who fights for Edalji's reinstatement acquires relevance in connection with the creation process of the Sherlock Holmes series. Interestingly, in the very same year, another novel structured in a similar manner came out by the German author Daniel Kehlmann. His *Die Vermessung der Welt* [*Measuring the World*] (2005) also follows the career of two nineteenth-century celebrities, Alexander von Humboldt, explorer and naturalist and Carl Friedrich Gauss, mathematician and scientist (not literary but natural science authors this time), by giving parallel narratives of their lives, thoughts and relationship with each other. Perhaps the idea of providing two intertwining fictional biographies is a more democratic way of presenting historical persona, as this means the qualification of one story by the other, putting them both into perspective. In addition, intellectual history or the broader cultural context can also be better understood if more accounts are juxtaposed, therefore this type of fictional biography may well flourish in the future. Such a focus on authors and their writing process further questions posterity's authority over the life and texts of historical writers, especially considering the positivist implications of the referentiality of these post-Victorian *Künstlerromans*. Taking into account the trust the readership puts into historical facts, the prefaces of some of the discussed Henry James biographia reverse the usual warning about the entirely fictitious nature of characters and advocate claims for the opposite only allowing for fiction in the case of lack of facts leaving room for speculation (Lodge 2005: "Preface," Tennant 2002: "Author's Note"). Critics argue for the keeping of a healthy balance between biography and fiction (Miller 2002: 169) or for the indissoluble difference between the two (Kaplan 2007: 65), yet, the shift in terminology signifies the primacy of fiction: analogically to biopics in film studies, literary biography slowly transforms into biofiction.

It seems then that from being one type of biography, the subgenre of literary biography has gone a long way to making the biographical into one kind of fiction. In his review of a biography on Anthony Burgess, tellingly titled "Thrice Told Tales," Ákos I. Farkas more than once refers to a fictional biography by Vladimir Nabokov to warn of the limits of

biography as a genre. Even if one aims for meticulousness in every respect to maintain the documentary factuality of the life of a historical person, such a venture proves impossible by definition as the authentic source of information is already dead, but even if (s)he were alive, (s)he would confabulate the story, not to mention the listener who functions as yet another filter shaping the original account, hence the thrice told tales (2006: 313-318). Lucasta Miller's *The Brontë Myth* provides another good example of a critique processing this shift of biography towards the fictional. The scholar traces how Charlotte Brontë's biography and its fictional appropriations have been subject to various myths and critical schools of thought in the last two centuries. Depending on the disciplinary background of writing up the author's life, terms such as life-writing or psychobiography emerge that may prove useful in further elaborations of the genre of biofiction. Similarly, Saunders's constitution of biofiction as a four-part hybrid consisting of biography, autobiography, fiction and criticism (Saunders 2008: 126) exemplifies how the genre's terminological refinement has already begun. Finally, a service that contemporary biofiction can do for historical authors and their canonical works is to facilitate reconstruction by involving the readers in the game of literary detection and thus make them learn about the nineteenth century through its twenty-first-century rewritings, possibly leading them back to the sources.

4.2 Island Fiction

As it appears on the basis of Chapter 2, the prevalent focus of narratives of identity currently concerns Britain's colonial legacies and postimperial status. This does not only translate into the discussed sensibilities to British colonial follies and reverse-colonisation voiced in post-Victorian fiction, but also to an emerging generic category perhaps best denoted by the term *island fiction* which I intend utilise for the novels in the following analysis. The prototype for this category is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), characterised from a postcolonial perspective with a specific focus on English expansionism as "a work whose protagonist is the founder of a new world, which he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England" (Said 1994: 70) and this character is, of course, male. In travel narratives of the nineteenth century a similar connection can be observed between the successful management of the colonies and racist conceptualisations of national identity (Gikandi 1996: 192) as also illustrated by the novelistic examples of

Chapter 2.2. In the post-Victorian agenda, the strategies of eighteenth-century discovery and nineteenth-century travel narratives are both employed for the description of journeys of ownership within the empire to assist in recontextualising postcolonial and postimperial identities. These ventures, based on hope and ignorance, are usually exposed as untenable journeys from one isolation into another and turn into nightmarish failures and clashes with other peoples instead, reinforcing disorientation and detachment. Such plots point towards a specific way of redefining identities and confirm that adaptations are particularly well suited to express and provide alternatives for problematic political positions, as also argued by Sanders (2006: 98).

K. J. Renk describes how historical discoveries romanticising new territories as *tabula rasa* over which imperial control can be claimed are transformed into the colonising ideology of the nineteenth century. These narratives impose monolithic views on colonised areas, “[t]he ideal, bourgeois family, the political family (the motherland and her children), the notion of England as a garden paradise synonymous with heaven, and the shrines of enlightenment that transmitted English ideology” (1999:19), taming the newly acquired untamed land into an ordered English garden (33). In her *In Praise of New Travellers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women Writers* (2001), Isabel Hoving also identifies the ethnocentrism in the Western theory of travel and appropriates this discourse to construct identities of ex-colonised writers. As it seems, the trope of travel provides a fruitful tool to (re)interpret (post)colonial and (post)imperial relations, since it engages motion, process and change involving the simultaneous narrativisation of geographical, psychological, social and political spaces. Simon Gikandi identifies the trope of travel as a crucial means of “generat[ing] narratives that are acutely concerned with self-realization in the spaces of the other” (1996: 8), and later extends it to “a mechanism of cultural critique and self-reflexivity” (92). Both definitions bear relevance to my argument, since the formation of identity as well as its placement into a greater discursive context receives attention in novels employing this trope. As Gikandi explains, in nineteenth-century travel writing a journey to the other end of the empire was a necessity for the understanding of the meaning of Englishness. These travel narratives were addressed to domestic audiences, therefore they had the task to prove that the only existing but non-viable alternatives to Victorian civilisation and progress were “barbarism abroad and decay at home” (117).

What Gikandi considers the main reason for travel in Victorian times, namely that it was motivated by the crisis and anxieties of changing temporal and geographical boundaries at home (1996: 103), resurfaces in today's post-Victorian fiction in travels into the history of empire, inscribing its future in the text together with present day anxieties similar to those of the Victorians. One of these anxieties is the loss of the empire and the experience of Britain's, and especially England's, political and economic isolation in the EU and the EEC. This has enhanced the production of novels emphasising insularity¹⁰⁹ as a form of existential anxiety of loss of home and history in the face of the reality of the current historical situation, as the following comparison of Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000) with Julian Barnes's *England, England* (1998) proves.¹¹⁰ Springing from its postimperial status Britain's isolation does not only prove difficult in a European context, but also in a postcolonial one, as argued by critics pointing out that metropolitan Britain has for a long time been imagined as part of but still separate from the Empire, portrayed "as an 'island nation' mostly untroubled by its imperial project" (Hall and Rose 2006: 20-21). The resulting experiences of (mis)conceptions of home and self are shown through Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991). The third area of political conflicts consists of the ongoing devolution of power eventually leading to the unmasking of what Susan Bassnett calls one of the most misleading British myths, the idea of a single island whose island people form a collective against the rest of the world, an idea that has long served as a convenient cover up for internal difficulties (2001: 500). The novelistic illustration of this aspect is presented in the detailed analysis of *The Eyre Affair* in the next subchapter. Insularity and isolation emerge as common characteristics of the mentioned anxieties addressed in the post-Victorian novels whose analysis is to follow, all of which feature inter-insular travels and interactions, hence the categorisation *island fiction*.

Written in the tradition of in Barnes's seminal *England, England* debunking Englishness, the characters of Kneale's *English Passengers* are on the lookout for a new home to replace England. Both titles denote the strong national referentiality of the novels, the former

¹⁰⁹ Strongman devotes two sections in his examination of Booker-winning novels to the question of insularity, one concerning English identities in their domestic environment (Strongman 2002: 143-146) and the other examining the same in the context of the English abroad (Strongman 2002: 195-196).

¹¹⁰ The latter text is not a post-Victorian novel, but its status as a seminal work in the tradition of which later critiques of the eighties' and nineties' political redefinition of English national identity based on Victorian tenets were written legitimises its use as a basis for comparison.

doubling the place the latter indicating travel from it. Curiously, these journeys do not lead to another mainland but to another island with the respective aims of building another England on the Isle of Wight to serve tourists' stereotypical knowledge of the country and to discover the Garden of Eden in Tasmania led by a captain from the Isle of Man. Readdressing the imperial practice of transporting criminals to the colonies in order to keep England morally clean becomes unmasked by the initiators of such an exchange becoming criminals themselves: the heads of the business venture in *England, England* thrive in corruption accompanying the heritage industry and the dubious crew of *English Passengers* engages in a range of crimes from smuggling to murder.¹¹¹ Colonial functions also get reversed in both novels: being full of convicts, sick and demoralized people, the Old England, that is, the original home of the coloniser of the Barnes text begins to look like its colonies in the nineteenth century, whereas the Isle of Wight, whose conceptual name is suggestive enough on its own, features as an Atlantis-like new-England. However, this island becomes corrupted later as well, uncovering a dystopian society, possibly without a monarch since the royal family may also just be a Madame Tussaud's imitation, owned and governed by a multinational company similar to the one described in Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* discussed later in this chapter. Hence, the Barnes text is read as a clever debunking of the idea of national memory and identity (Bényei 2008: 24), which holds for *English Passengers* as well. Similarly to Barnes's entrepreneurs, Kneale's seafarer opportunists also assist in destroying their supposed paradise in Tasmania by partaking in ethnic cleansing and attempting to fulfil the usual nineteenth-century colonial mission. However, their plan fails on many levels yielding contrary results to the ones they have expected. For example, the scientist figure, Dr. Thomas Potter treating the aboriginals as mere objects of a case study becomes a curiosity exhibit, demonstrating the colonisers' loss of their power position. This way Potter's racist venture to prove the superiority of the English is exposed just like the similarly amateurish theory of his antagonist, Reverend

¹¹¹ William Golding's sea trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth* (*Rites of Passage*, 1980; *Close Quarters*, 1987; *Fire Down Below*, 1989) should also be mentioned here, since it features as a work of island fiction with a similar plot to that of *English Passengers*. Just like in Kneale's text, a wide selection of the members of nineteenth-century English society travels on the ships of Golding's sequels, thus emphasising differences in class, language and conventions. Similarly, during the voyage, also aiming towards the South, various mishaps and atrocities involving death take place. Yet, in contrast to *English Passengers* and *Cambridge* analysed in this subchapter, which mainly focus on travel and colonisation including the voices of the colonised, in *To the Ends of the Earth* identity-formation resulting from isolation only concerns the colonisers on the board of the ships of the trilogy. Therefore, I do not discuss this group of novels in detail here, not to mention that due to the Booker and the Nobel Prizes Golding was awarded, his works have received ample attention already.

Geoffrey Wilson advancing that The Garden of Eden actually exists and is located in Tasmania. Both accounts are narrated in a self-important, respectively quasi-scientific and quasi-religious language, making the two characters ridiculous. Disillusioned by the negative turn of events, the failed mission returns home and the reverend giving up his earlier aim to find paradise in Tasmania, which considering what actually happens in the place “seems a sick joke” (“Looking for Eden” 2000: 107) starts constructing an alternative ideal, this time at the point of their departure: “[w]as Eden here, in England, all along? Is this the answer? Has all of this great venture merely been some kind of grand test? *But then why didst thou send me all that way?*” (Kneale 2000: 426).

Such reversal of functions and cultural dislocation has various implications. For instance, the questioning of the existence of an original home island may raise the anxiety that today’s Britain is already a replica only, an anxiety emphasised by Barnes and especially relevant in the framework of the flourishing heritage industry analysed in Chapter 2.2. The fear of a non-existent original, making everything we perceive a mere copy, reverberates with Baudrillard’s concept of simulation that is especially applicable to the theme parks of the heritage enterprise of the eighties and the nineties:

Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle (Baudrillard “Simulacra & Simulations” 1983).

This depiction of Disneyland in its relation to the US is also true for England, England compared to England in Barnes’s text and The Garden of Eden projected onto either Tasmania or England in Kneale’s novel. Theorised on the basis of Baudrillard’s above introduced concept as “a perfect copy of a history that never existed” (Hewison 1991: 174), such an image-making of possible homes and their (hi)stories radically destabilises fixed national and cultural identities. In the ventures depicted in the fictional worlds of these two novels characters strive for a new start in an imaginary home, an “England” which does not exist and once constructed it turns out to be utterly dysfunctional. An enterprise similar to

these fictional ones actually took place in real life as well. As part of the Dubai-project of rebuilding the earth in the Persian Gulf, two Irish businessmen bought the island reproduced in the shape of Ireland, where they set to rebuild the “original” island of Ireland. Just like the short-lived Millennium Dome analysed in Chapter 2.2, this investment has equally proved to be of a temporary kind: the company managing the project went bankrupt at the end of 2009, the owner of the Ireland property committed suicide and, not able to withstand the forces of nature, the island complex is sinking (“Süllyed a Dubaj álomsziget” [The Dubai-Dreamisland is Sinking] 2010).

In addition to this anxiety about physical dislocation the other concern raised by the reversal of authority positions with the locals of Tasmania in *English Passengers* is that of developing new political and cultural identities. Western societies’ imperialistic behaviour towards island cultures in the nineteenth century may in the long run be reversed as the fictional accounts of the British Isles and especially England exchanging positions with its ex-colonies both in geographic and political terms depict. Such reversals of power have become especially threatening in the framework of ongoing devolution within Britain and the country’s increasing isolation from the surrounding political and cultural contexts. This fear comes across convincingly from the narrative tension produced by the juxtaposition of multifarious voices in Kneale’s text. The tragic rapes and murders on the island are mainly related by the young aboriginal Peevay (rechristened as Cromwell by the colonisers to whose name he lives up with his rebelliousness) and the opportunistic projects happening on the ship are accounted for by their initiators: Captain Kewley’s repeated attempts to close the best deal of his life, Reverend Geoffrey Wilson’s zeal to prove that the Garden of Eden does exist and Dr. Thomas Potter’s aim to confirm his racist theories by pseudo-scientific research yield a comic mix. As critics also claim, the stories within *English Passengers* often feel like separate novels “because one stream of its action is essentially foreordained and tragic, the other unpredictable and comic” (Hochschild 2000: 26) and they only meet towards the end of the novel which is when the reversal of powers and actual cultural dislocation also take place.

Both Renk and Hoving, introduced above, focus their analyses of travel narratives and displacement on Caribbean writers. As postcolonial criticism maintains, in order to write about their home space and create the conceptual category of Caribbean literature, local

authors had to leave the West-Indies, many of them settling in Britain (Su 2005: 54).¹¹² Similarly, the English may have to do the same, that is, leave their country for another island, in order to create their own identity again. This way, as it is also the case in post-Victorian island fiction, all participants can experience, what critics regard as long due “both the utopian and the dystopian sides of imperial relations” (Kaplan 2006: 192). The range of these relations is well illustrated in Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge*, a novel addressing personal and cultural displacement by activating both imperial travel accounts and slave narratives similarly to *Wide Sargasso Sea* analysed in the previous chapter. The main narrative space is given to an Englishwoman, Emily Cartwright who makes a journey to her father’s plantations in the West Indies. During her sea voyage she learns and records new nautical expressions in a similar fashion to characters in *English Passengers* and keeps this scientific interest once she arrives at her destination to also record local terms, concepts and events. Thus we learn about the narratives of the empire concerning local races, creolisation and various social and cultural processes. Her initial imperial perspective making statements like “[t]his first part of my journey was over and I was breaking the last remaining link with a past that I understood. From this moment I would be entering a dark tropical unknown” (Phillips 1991: 22), gradually changes into realising the great variety in local existences from the Obeah-woman Christiania, through the black slave Cambridge speaking perfect English, to her servant the Creole Stella. She develops a sensibility to some of them and understands their loss of identity, “the rootlessness of these people who have been torn from their native soil and thrust into the busy commerce of our civilised world. It is much to be doubted that they will ever reclaim a true sense of self. The evidence before my eyes suggests that such a process will unfold only after the passage of many decades, perhaps many centuries” (70-71).

In parallel to this her own concept of place becomes unstable as she travels around the island. Again starting out from an imperial perspective utilising the terminology of travel narratives she confirms that sugar industry is inefficient, so “[s]oon the English must abandon this seeming paradise” (86). England identified as her home is later perceived in more questionable terms, as she thinks of her status in it from afar just before going to

¹¹² The same is true for South-American, Indian etc. authors, and maybe for authors in general who live in exile, so the exclusively Caribbean perspective introduced here can be expanded to various other post-Victorian and non-post-Victorian but postcolonial novels that fictionalise similar changes of location.

sleep: “And to dream of what? England, of course. And a life sacrificed to the prejudices which despise my sex. Of loneliness. Of romance and adventure. Of freedom” (113). The referent of the last sentences may meanwhile have shifted to the West-Indies, as right after waking up she realises that she has adjusted and took a liking to local circumstances, so she begins to reconcile herself to the idea of remaining there. Just like the female characters in both plotlines of *Charlotte*, she becomes infatuated with a local person, Mr Brown, gives birth to a dead child, contracts tropical fever, but contrary to other nineteenth-century characters she survives all these. By the end of her stay, she acquires a different identity concerning both her self and her location as it emerges from her reply to the question of her English doctor:

‘And when will you be returning to our country?’

‘Our country?’

‘England, of course.’

England. Emily smiled to herself. The doctor delivered the phrase as though this England was a dependable garment that one simply slipped into or out of according to one’s whim. Did he not understand that people grow and change? Did he not understand that one day a discovery might be made that this country-garb is no longer of a correct measure? And what then? (177).

The black servant Cambridge similarly experiences various adjustments to his identity also determined by his location. As a child he is taken away from his parents and transported from his home, Guinea to England first. His vision of his white capturers counters the imperial narrative constructing the black as savages: “I wondered constantly if these men of no colour, with their loose hair and decayed teeth, were not truly intent upon cooking and eating us, for they seemed overly fond of flesh” (135). This perception of the white as greedy and corrupt human flesh-merchants equates cannibalism with slave trading for profit. The issue of naming discussed in various parts of the previous chapter also emerges in the case of this marginalised figure: the Guinean Olumide is christened Thomas on the boat to England where he also learns English. His religious spiritual leader in London makes him into a Christian person named David Henderson, and that act changes his self-perception too: “Truly I was now an Englishman, albeit a little smudgy of complexion! Africa spoke to me only of a history I had cast aside” (147). Then he marries a white

Christian woman, Anna and they start travelling around England as missionaries with this new identity, campaigning for abolition. His wife and newborn baby die at childbirth, so he leaves for a mission to Guinea on his own with an inheritance he gets from his benefactors. However, as his money is stolen on the boat and he is made into a slave again he has to readjust his identity once more:

[t]hat I, a virtual Englishman, was to be treated as base African cargo, caused me such hurtful pain as I was barely able to endure. To lose my dear wife, fair England and now liberty in such rapid succession!... yet another passage of loss. The horrors of this second illegal journey I have chosen to forget, although this unnatural and painful murdering of the memory has caused me distress at least as great as that suffered whilst enduring the voyage (156).

This murdering of his own memory gives an interesting twist to the effacement of cultural memories discussed in the second chapter where it was always the dominant ideologies annihilating unwanted (hi)stories. Extending this concept, here it seems that the acquisition of a new self-identity provokes similar reactions on an individual level. David Henderson finally gets bought by his present owner; he is renamed Cambridge and remarries, this time the black woman Christiania feared for her obeah powers.

It seems then that in this novel the attitude of both characters is determined by their location: Emily and her antislavery approach in England become imperialistic in the Caribbean as long as she is dominated by her fears of her new surroundings and rather identifies with her far off home; once she immerses in the life on the colony she cannot fully relate to her previous home any more. Cambridge becomes an abolitionist missionary in England but rids himself of his African identity; while back in the Caribbean he is closer to the civilising operation of the English and looks down upon Africans. As critics also note “[i]n Caryl Phillips’s work, people are rarely home” (Kurnick “Middle Passages” 1993). Hence, the post-Victorian rethinking of imperial relations is a process of first destabilising personal, national and cultural identities in order to then constructing them anew in different terms. These different terms could emerge through the application of Mardorossian’s relationality theory, by replacing fixed variables with more fluid ones, establishing a new theoretical framework of transgenerational, transracial, translinguistic

and translocal analyses (2005: 1-9), as introduced in Chapter 2.2. In the present argument the category of the translocal is especially relevant, as by its application the conception of place, in particular characters' home, can be revised into a more fluid variable. Contextualising the concept of home in the discussion of the trope of travel within the theoretical framework of the translocal, the reading of the travel-home contrast could be changed into an understanding of travel *as* home. If this happens, dislocation becomes the norm and not the exception acquiring the function of a constructive interpretive tool. The trope of travel thus activated in the reading process shows conceptual similarities with the act of (re)writing itself, especially if perceived in Hutcheon's terms who regards adaptations as travelling stories that undergo "*transculturation* and *indigenisation* across cultures, languages, and history" during their accommodation process, which radically change their implications (2006: xvi). As it emerges from this explanation as well, as a subtype of historical fiction, post-Victorian novels constitute a category of double displacement, not only a temporal but also a spatial one adding new perspectives to the understanding of changing narratives of identification. These changing narratives also seem to prompt adjustments in critical terminology, as illustrated by the above referred to two critics' use of the prefix trans- affixed to their variables to replace other terms in postcolonial theory usually prefixed by post-.

Emily and Cambridge's accounts in Phillips's text are read like the stories of the outcast protagonists in *Oscar and Lucinda* discussed in the second chapter as possible reconstructions of effaced individual cultural memories. Critics underline that Emily and Cambridge's narratives run in parallel but do not join (Chavanelle "Caryl Phillips's Cambridge" 1998, Kuurola 2007: 144). In addition, these accounts, countering reader expectations, are not diametrically opposed either, framed by the coloniser vs. colonised dichotomy, but unravel in their own complexity exhibiting a more complicated web of sympathies (Kurnick "Middle Passages" 1993) as shown above in the illustrations of the ambiguity of the two characters' attitudes. The disapproval some critics voiced about reading Jane's marriage in terms of the slave narrative Bertha's fate yields in *Jane Eyre* is avoided here because, as it is observed, even if both accounts are produced by marginalised characters Cambridge's status of an oppressed black slave does not prompt his identification with Emily's feminist pleas but keeps him in the role of the dominant male in his own marriage (Kuurola 2007: 142). Though the ending of the novel is saturated by

losses and deaths as results of mishaps and misunderstandings caused by communication difficulties, critics look beyond the pessimistic solution and rather see the effort of mediation as a possibly productive means raising awareness to present frictions by calling attention to the disjunctive nature of past cultural memories (Kurnick “Middle Passages” 1993, Kuurola 2007: 144). The choice of title may be a good example of this. Even if the bulk of the narrative is given to Emily, the representative of the dominant culture, Cambridge’s short account has a similarly powerful effect which is further emphasised with the title’s exclusive focus on him. Besides, as Chavanelle notes, the extension of the semantic field of Cambridge denoting a prominent English centre for learning to naming a black slave in the West Indies also endows him with the authority of the centre (“Caryl Phillips’s Cambridge” 1998), to which I would add that in the same sense Cambridge also provides a site of symbolic education for the reader concerning imperial legacies.

On the basis of this section’s readings of *English Passengers* and *Cambridge*, the following definition of island fiction emerges: novels belonging to this category have in common the trope of travel, from one island (usually the British one) to another (mostly an ex-colony), involving a handful of adventures connected to the colonial experience, offering the possibility of not only facing the committed British colonial follies but also creating new narratives of identification in postimperial Britain. Hence this novelistic category would serve the purpose of an additional reading tool for elaborating these possibilities just like the cultural objects utilised for the same end in the previous chapters. Apart from the so-far discussed post-Victorian novels, island fiction could incorporate other contemporary British texts as well. J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986), a postmodern rewrite of *Robinson Crusoe* with postcolonial and feminist foci, provides one such example, whose cunning title implies a paradoxical relationship to the author, the plot and the main character of the earlier text, mainly concentrating on its characters’ life after Susan Barton, the heroine’s arrival on the island of “Cruso” and the tongueless Friday. Jeanette Winterson offers another such instance in her comic refashioning of the Bible, *Boating for Beginners* (1985), which focuses on preparations prior to leaving on Noah’s Ark to survive the approaching flood, adopting the form of an utopistic romance and a dystopia of capitalism at the same time. These texts could be setting trends for an increase of similar novels in the post-Victorian context which would then not only emphasise the exchange between the travellers and the colonised but a wider range of island-based activities possibly serving as

additional means to imagine various new relations. Viewed in a wider context, these novels could also contribute to redefining how “Western postmodern poetics of travel are connected to the construction of the shifting, mobile identity of (post)modernity” (Hoving 2001: 16), providing new interrelations of self and home in today’s postcolonial and postimperial context.

4.3 Novel Sequels: Dickensiana and the Case of Jasper Fforde’s *The Eyre Affair*

As we have seen, many of the so-far discussed texts are adaptations of previous authors, texts or topoi. The concept of adaptation points towards yet another popular trend in post-Victorian fiction: the reintroduction of the novel sequel. In the Victorian era the novel sequel was perceived as a series of plots produced by the same author, involving the same characters, sometimes even the same setting, produced more or less in a chronological order, like Anthony Trollope’s *Chronicles of Barsetshire* (six novels published between 1855 and 1867). Contemporary adaptive series expand the nineteenth-century understanding of this generic mode by purposefully distorting the timeline, fragmenting the narrative through reporting the same events from more perspectives and being independently produced by different writers. But post-Victorian adaptations seem to aim for precisely such distortions: they disrupt chronologies as well as deconstruct the concepts of authorship and originality, thus affecting the literary canon. This subversive potential of adaptations shifting power relations is identified both as a reason for their popularity (Hutcheon 2006: 174) and as a decisive feature assisting in promoting their academic study (Sanders 2006: 98). These critical reactions prove how scholarly readings of post-Victorian fiction closely connect low and high culture. I also think that such power shifts take place on the interpretive level. Critical analyses focus on more items of the adaptive map simultaneously instead of just tackling one text: discussions of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* rarely occur without a mention of Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), for example. In addition, adaptive texts themselves tend to include intertextual references to more than one “original.” D. M. Thomas’s *Charlotte* comprises an adaptation of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* as we have seen in the previous chapter. Some postmodern adaptations completely disrupt the chronological, narrative and plot references to nineteenth-century texts, in which cases the terms *adaptive chain* or *adaptive series* seem insufficient to incorporate relationships between adaptations and their source texts, hence

the term *adaptive map*. In the following, two cases of sequelisation are introduced to demonstrate how diversified adaptation can be and what potentials there are in the interpretation of novels as sequels and novel sequels. First, Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006) are briefly examined, which can be read as an adaptive series despite their independently refashioning Dickens's *Great Expectations* in different ways and second, Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001) is analysed, which at the same time as featuring on the adaptive map of *Jane Eyre* belongs to another adaptive series.

Derivatives from Dickens's life and texts, commonly called Dickensiana constitute a complex map of adaptations. The best known Dickens appropriator, Peter Ackroyd's repertoire of refashionings ranges from rewriting one of the Victorian author's texts into a novel (*Little Dorrit in The Great Fire of London* 1982), through referring to numerous of his texts in one chapter of a novel (*English Music* 1992) to creating a monumental all-integrative biofiction of the nineteenth-century classic (*Dickens* 1990). Gaynor Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress* (2008) qualifies the Victorian author's biography from a feminist point of view, through getting an invented nineteenth-century writer, Alfred Gibson's life modelled on Dickens's narrated by his neglected wife, mixing biographical data with information taken from his fictional texts. Charles Palliser's *The Quincunx* (1989) reads as an accumulated Dickens-experience and is therefore regarded as an attempt to reproduce all Dickens novels (Malone 1990: 12). As this subchapter examines novel sequels through integrating the foci of the previous two subchapters, that is, biofiction and island fiction, closest to its focus are works that are positioned on the adaptive map of Dickensiana as ones mainly derived from one source text and concentrating on authorship connected to legacies of the empire. Such items are for instance Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*, both titled after fictional characters from the same text. These works refashion Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) from a postcolonial perspective following the prototypical emigrant story of leaving home as well as featuring a controversial appropriative author figure. Jones's novel additionally addresses political legacies of Carey's text resulting in an even more complex use of the Victorian (con)text. One could argue that through its double ending *Great Expectations* has itself delivered its first adaptation. Bryant, however, counters this by claiming that even if the more optimistic conclusion means a complete reconception of the original story, the confidence of the second version cannot be comprehended without the pessimism of the first one (Bryant

2002: 87), which in my view still does not exclude its reading as an adaptation of the original text, especially in Bryant's framework which, as introduced in Chapter 1.3, promotes a flexible understanding of rewriting based on textual fluidity. The controversial ending reappears in these two post-Victorian revisions by their offering both positive and negative *Bildungsroman* stories for the main characters they rewrite.

The story of *Jack Maggs* is set in the Dickensian London full of crimes, prostitution and corruption. Maggs arrives here in search for his ward, Henry Phipps and meets the writer, Tobias Oates who promises to help him. Oates, commonly read as parody of Dickens, is an eccentric who conducts medical experiments and séances of mesmerism without expertise, which results in his accidental killing of people; he cheats on his wife with her sister and then kills the sister through an overdose of pills given to her to get rid of her baby from their affair. He writes about anything for money, prioritises writing over life and perceives all his interactions with others in the service of his great work. On meeting Maggs, Oates wants to find out who the mysterious man is and by mesmerising him, the writer learns that the Australian man is a convict. He wants to write Jack's story into a groundbreaking novel: "But in all of English literature there was nothing like the dark journey he now planned to take inside the Criminal Mind" (Carey 1997a: 214), which sounds as boastful as Edward Casaubon's venture to find the Key to All Mythologies in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871). In Oates's novel, titled *The Death of Jack Maggs* the writer imagines Jack's death in a fire, which is the end he himself finally meets. Similarly to Oates, Henry Phipps turns out to be a conceited character. He lives from the money Jack deposits on his account, but instead of meeting his benefactor, he tries to kill Maggs, so that he does not have to repay anything. Jack escapes from these corruptive crime scenes of the coloniser country and exchanges his unsuccessful stay in England for a peaceful, prosperous life on the colony, eventually dying in Australia as an acknowledged president of his shire.

Jack Maggs is perceived to be writing back to *Great Expectations* as *Wide Sargasso Sea* writes back to *Jane Eyre*: most of the original situations are reversed disavowing the dominant Anglo-centric discourse and rehabilitating the Australians (Letissier 2004: 124,

Humpherys 2005: 450).¹¹³ Even Maggs's handwriting bears the sign of this reversal as it can only be read by applying a mirror thus constituting a fictional example of the refracting qualities of glass discussed in Chapter 2.2. This task, however, is not accomplished by the convict's ward Phipps, but by Oates who compromises the authority of his exquisite mediator position, and uses Jack's diary and letters to enhance his own career as a writer. The figure of Oates provides an intriguing example of how the nineteenth-century importance of the writer appears in today's reconstructions of literary authors as celebrities. He reads as a parody of Dickens, mocking the myth surrounding the Victorian author's cultic personality. Such a refashioning can also be understood as an ironic opinion of the dubiousness of current literary endeavours that revive the Victorian age and its popular genre, sensation fiction through a fictionalised nineteenth-century account of acquiring literary fame. From a postcolonial aspect, critics seem to forge a sequel-like relationship between this novel and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*, since, as Jennifer Gribble argues, "Carey creates an Australian way of seeing, but Australian ways of seeing are subjected to powerful indictment in *Mister Pip*." In addition, in Jones's adaptation the privileging of the speaker gets a further twist. The English boy's narrative lead of *Great Expectations*, accorded to the Australian patriarchal man in *Jack Maggs*, gets transferred to a young indigenous girl, Mathilda in *Mister Pip*. Hence, the Victorian text and context are put to an even more complex use in this latter revision.

In *Mister Pip* it is the Australians who try to gain more power over the island of Papua New Guinea in the 1990s by provoking ethnic and civil conflicts among the inhabitants, which shows how British imperial practices are inherited further in the ex-colonies. Pip's story is doubly rewritten into twentieth-century narratives: it is interwoven with the autobiography of Mr Watts, who in the course of events identifies himself both with Pip and Charles Dickens, and it becomes the indigenous character-narrator, Mathilda's breakout from the war-stricken Bougainville, New Zealand. In her autobiography Mathilda retrospectively recounts her village school-years, where together with their teacher, Mr Watts they read a version of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. The pupils go home,

¹¹³ Letissier even reads the ending of the novel letting Maggs return to Australia as a shift in the possibility of identifications: instead of the English readership of *Great Expectations*, this way the Australian audience of *Jack Maggs* is able to experience itself as "a whole nation of convicts' descendants" (2004: 126). The same search for ancestry motivates the narrator of *Oscar and Lucinda* to understand his past, and that novel, as already analysed in the second chapter, likewise surveys relations between England and Australia.

share their learning experience with their parents and the name Mr Pip spreads around the island so rapidly that some rioters, not trained to differentiate between fictional and real characters, start looking for him. Trying to stop the troubles his teaching material has caused, Mr Watt first assumes the identity of Mr Dickens taking responsibility for the creation of Mr Pip, but once he realises that their attackers want a Mr Pip that is alive, he identifies himself as that. The atrocities claim the lives and homes of numerous natives, Mathilda's mother being one of them who is first raped and then killed. Mr Watt tries to pacify the rioters by telling them his autobiography to which they patiently listen for a while but then suddenly kill him and feed him to the pigs. In addition to the war to which the repeating conflicts have amounted, there is a flood in which Mathilda almost dies, an ending that would echo the solution of George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860). However, a log finally saves her, which she, remembering Pip's benefactor in *Great Expectations*, christens Mr Jagers. She then lands in Australia, reads Dickens's complete works, writes her thesis on *Great Expectations* and reads out the novel to her students in Mr Watt's fashion. After visiting the British Library and Dickens heritage sights in London she disappointedly returns home and, instead of pursuing an academic career, sets to writing her autobiography.

Just like Carey's Maggs, Mathilda embodies a positive *Bildungsroman*-figure, and similarly to Tobias Oates, Mr Watts gets killed in his efforts to claim authority over the Victorian writer and his character. Mr Watts as the only white person on the island becomes the victim of his own project, using a book for the establishment of a Western white male authority on a conquered island of the British Empire of the past. Though both novels feature an appropriative writer figure, in contrast to the parody of rewriting Dickens's life in *Jack Maggs*, in Jones's text the tone of transposing the historical author in a twentieth-century setting is more serious. Just like in Arnold's *Girl in a Blue Dress*, Dickens is unmasked as a character who ruthlessly gets rid of his family: "[t]he man who writes so touchingly and powerfully about orphans cannot wait to turn his own kin out the door" (Jones 2006: 212). In this capacity he is compared to the teller of his stories, Mr Watts who also abandoned his family before moving to Bougainville, making Watt's story analogous to Dickens's and his death a fate the nineteenth-century author could also have suffered. Hence, just like in *Jack Maggs*, in *Mister Pip* the author figure possibly rewriting Dickens is controversial and meets a brutal death, indicating alternative fates for the

historical author, thereby implying further potentials in writing literary biographies as argued earlier.

Characters from *Great Expectations* receive minor attention in *Mister Pip*, Magwitch features as a helper in the shape of a log and Pip appears as an appealing but distant fictional figure. The emphasis rather seems to be on how Pip's story and the story of *Great Expectations* works in a different context. As already argued in Chapter 2.2, the book *Great Expectations* functions as a cultural memento or "portable property" (Gribble 2008: 187) with various repercussions. Due to its strong but foreign influence on children, it incites conflicts between the native parents and Mr Watt. For one of these children, Mathilda the text provides a narrative of empowerment assisting in creating her own identity, even if she later learns that the real *Great Expectations* is different from the children's version she first knew. The novel has a strong political potential as well: it provokes wars among various ethnicities and civil entities saving and ruining lives. Its function can also be compared to the novel *Jane Eyre* in *Charlotte*, where it means a source of escape for Miranda from her self and life which she dislikes. In *Mister Pip* Dickens's text also provides safety but not in terms of escapism, rather as a means to keep away fear that is produced by the actual real war-context: "Our only consolation was that by reading it a second and a third time we would still have another country to flee to. And that would save our sanity" (Jones 2006: 80). Yet, it is precisely the possession or dispossession of the novel that increases political frictions, so the book also adopts a dialogic function changing its status from a silent cultural memento to one that actively engages in influencing present-day events by utilising its potential as a historical narrative. In *Mister Pip* the book gets lost, stolen, burnt and recreated and displays multiple roles reviving personal and collective memories of the past, in other words, it is an object whose materiality and fictional content undergo a series of changes very much like those of another Victorian text, *Jane Eyre* featured in *The Eyre Affair* to be analysed below. The fact that a literary work is at the centre of attention, influencing events as well as provoking violence, could be read as an attempt to reinstate literature as a powerful political tool and legitimises the method of activating various memory objects, such as books, photographs or buildings as interpretive tools in understanding fiction, as I argue in Chapter 2. As it emerges from the above analysis, *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* adapting the same Victorian text may both be read as individual items on the adaptive map of Dickensiana as well as an adaptive series based on

one source text. Reading them, similarly to the three novels discussed in the previous chapter, as an adaptive chain, however, would be too far-fetched, as the relationship between the two adaptations is forged by criticism and not the texts themselves.

Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001), which is the subject matter of the following case study, takes up a peculiar position in the literary canon as it is part of more adaptive series at the same time: it functions as a first book of the heroine's serialised experiences as a literary detective as well as a sequel on the adaptive map of *Jane Eyre*. In contrast to the *Jane Eyre*-chain introduced in last chapter's case study writing back to the nineteenth-century original, this novel rather makes use of the Victorian story for the purposes of its own plot. Besides showing a theoretical awareness of issues related to authorship, adaptation and originality, the novel also concerns itself with postcolonial, postimperial and (post)feminist identities. All these receive attention in a predominantly entertaining mode and with considerable metafictional input, yielding an intriguing generic mixture of detective and science fiction. Therefore, this text provides a good example of how the listed interests interact and translate into generic features in current post-Victorian fiction. The novel maintains two parallel realms of action: one part of the plot takes place in an Orwellian England in the 1980s and the other occurs in the fictional world of *Jane Eyre*. The interdependence of the two is triggered by the ending of the Victorian novel the late-twentieth-century readers know and dislike, which is that Jane goes to India to work with St. John Rivers. Rochester also refuses to accept this ending, and once the twentieth-century literary detective called Thursday Next enters the novel through the futuristic Prose Portal, he uses her as an assistant¹¹⁴ for changing it to Jane and Rochester marrying instead, which supplies the contested ending we know now. 'The Brontë Society' and other authorities oppose Thursday's intervention but the 'Brontë for the People' popular organisation overrules objections realising how much more the readers admire the novel after this interference. In return for the detective's kindness, Rochester also interferes with the twentieth-century plotline by sending the same lawyer who spoke up at his first wedding attempt to Jane to save Landen, Thursday's lover from a disastrous marriage to another woman. Once that relationship gets rectified as well, the literary detective receives another important task which is the point where the novel ends.

¹¹⁴ The name Thursday Next and her supportive role to Rochester is reminiscent of the name and function of Friday in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

This plot, centred on the fate of literary texts both in the phase of their production and reception, fictionalises a number of issues related to the literary scene discussed in Chapter 2.1. Firstly, how much power do publishers and readers have in shaping the final version of a literary text? –which appears a legitimate question for an author who has entered the domain of literature through the doors of the film industry. Jasper Fforde concedes that he chose *Jane Eyre* as the central intertextual reference for his novel because he assumed that readers would be familiar with its plot (Fforde “Beginnings” 2000), which already carries the grains of the ensuing interactive novelistic production both within and outside the text. The conflict between academic and popular institutions interested in the Brontë novel, echoing the dichotomy between texts of aesthetic value and bestsellers that has also emerged in the above discussion of the Henry James novels, provides an example of the fictionalisation of the high vs. low culture- debate introduced in Chapter 2.1. The Fforde text proves the argument advanced there, namely that elitist and non-elitist aspects of reading become mostly juxtaposed in post-Victorian fiction.¹¹⁵ The readers’ agency, prompted by the open ending of *The Eyre Affair* and the address of the website on the back cover of the book, manifests itself in their comments and adaptations online, which have by now evolved into a whole fictional universe. Some fans even reproduce the fictional act of Jane and Rochester naming their second child Helen Thursday Rochester in Fforde’s novel in real life by naming their children after characters in the book (Fforde “Thursday” 2003c). They also organise special commercial events such as the 2008 Fforde Fiesta (Fforde “Ffiesta08” 2008) buying and selling relics related to the novel series the detective’s adventures have since grown into.¹¹⁶

This course of events further supports the argument that the suspense effect created by publishing texts in instalments characteristic of canonical texts in the nineteenth century resurfaces today in similar serial modes of cultural production (Sanders 2006: 122) illustrated by the relationship of Dickens-instalments and television soaps in Chapter 1.3 and extended here by the concept of sequelisation inspiring similar receptive responses.

¹¹⁵ Fforde’s novelistic solution positions him on the popular side of the argument which could be read as his literary testimony to what he always underlines in his interviews, namely his lack of university training and the claim that “classics had become stuffy through being academized.” (Wells 2007: 198 footnote 4).

¹¹⁶ The series consists of the following titles: *Lost in a Good Book* (2002), *The Well of Lost Plots* (2003), *Something Rotten* (2004), *First Among Sequels* (2007) and *One of our Thursdays is Missing* (forthcoming in 2011).

Endings also acquire an additional quality to being open or controversial, namely that they are corruptible as well: out of a character or author's dislike and for the sake of the market endings can be changed in a way that even novelistic characters profit from it like in *The Eyre Affair*. In this sense the debated ending of *Jane Eyre* gets lifted out of its realism-romance dichotomy and is transferred back into the economic realm of commodity fiction. Adjusting to the nineteenth-century literary market, so masterfully achieved by Dickens through his instalments, gets fictionalised in connection with another writer as well: Arthur Conan Doyle in Barnes's fictional biography *Arthur and George*, tracing the Victorian author's thoughts during the creation process and acclaim of his Sherlock Holmes series:

Magazines published two kinds of stories: either lengthy serialisations which ensnared the reader week by week and month by month; or single, free-standing tales. The trouble with the tales was that they often didn't give you enough to bite on. The trouble with the serializations was that if you happened to miss a single issue, you lost the plot. Applying his practical brain to the problem, Arthur envisaged combining the virtues of the two forms: a series of stories, each complete in itself, yet filled with running characters to reignite the reader's sympathy or disapproval (2005: 47-48).

Later he is shocked how much art overwrites life: the newspapers do not devote any space to his father's death but are full of protests against the death of Holmes "whose popularity had begun to embarrass and even disgust his creator" (69). Once he learns how the market works, "he also knows that in the end the reader is king" (213), so he brings Holmes back to life. Thus the engagement with the creative process and authorial intentionality Hutcheon encourages critics to focus on (2006: 94-95) as mentioned in Chapter 2.1, is already happening on a fictional level. The invention and later reinvigoration of the figure of Sherlock Holmes thus influenced by the literary market resulted in a series of fifty six short stories, four novels and a number of adaptations. In *Arthur and George* the Holmes-story is doubled as Arthur himself becomes his own creation engaged in researching the case of the wrongly sentenced solicitor, while his assistant gets put into the role of Dr. Watson, which they both reflect on. This encounter could also be serialised as another detective sequel with the author assuming the role of his character. The protagonist of *The Eyre Affair*, Thursday Next is also a detective, the plot construction of the novel gets

similarly based on her ongoing adventures and the proliferation of the sequels to the Next-story may yield an equally grand output. In sum, it emerges that both the reception and the production side of contemporary sequels are comparable with the Victorian ones, which proves my argument advanced on the basis of Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg in Chapter 1.3: the critics' observation that the *sequel* as a site connecting author, narrative and audience is enhanced by historical junctures of certain (repeating) cultural conditions (1998: 17), can not only be applied to the eighteenth but also to the nineteenth century. The historical junctures of cultural conditions would in the case of the present and nineteenth-century sequels consist of comparable technical developments in the publishing industry as well as the refocalisation of authorship and author-reader interaction on the literary market.

Concerning the chronology of both the fictional events and our reading of different rewritings of the same text, there appears to be some difficulty in determining the "original" among adaptations. Some critics react to this by orienting the reader through refining terminology: thus among the main *Jane Eyre*-adaptations discussed in the previous chapter *Wide Sargasso Sea* reads a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, while *Charlotte* constitutes its sequel, and following the same logic, narratives retelling the same story from other characters' perspectives, such as Emma Tennant's *Adèle: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* (2002), could then be termed midquels¹¹⁷ or paraquels, which sound rather strange, yet readers obtain some assistance in interrelating texts by the consistent use of morphemes. Even if the same author, Emma Tennant wrote all editions of this last text, a confusion of titles further complicates the originality debate as different publications bear different titles and earlier versions get revised for various audiences. Thus the list of titles *Adèle: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* 2002, *The French Dancer's Bastard: The Story of Adèle from Jane Eyre* 2006, *Thornfield Hall: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* 2007 constitute different versions of the same midquel, on the basis of Bryant's argument presented in the second chapter, namely that different editions also count as rewriting for their meaning-changing quality (Bryant 2002: 66). For understanding the status of *The Eyre Affair*, the term parallelquel had to be coined to depict fiction with a storyline running parallel to a canonical novel, thus "break[ing] the rules of continuity by proposing an alternative text that interrogates the workings of the original" (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 186). This interrogation becomes

¹¹⁷ Term taken from Berninger and Thomas, (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 183).

quite complicated as *The Eyre Affair* seems to provide us with an original ending of *Jane Eyre* that is different from Charlotte Brontë's, making readers believe that Brontë's original ending is already an alternative one (188). With such a distortion of our chronological reading process, obviously mocking the originality debate introduced in the first chapter, the reconstruction of an "original" plot, that is, our understanding of the plot on the basis of the historically first text becomes problematic, consequently testing any text's claim of owning the status of the "original." This also finds a parodical echo within the novel by the paradox that the existence of a detectable genuine script is obviously questioned, yet the characters literally kill each other for the *Jane Eyre*-manuscript claiming that "[a]ll copies anywhere on the planet, in whatever form, originate from that first act of creation. When the original changes, all the others have to change too" (Fforde 2003: 208), which is an attitude echoing the divine Romantic concept of authorship and creation.¹¹⁸ Thus in this novel the mid-nineteenth-century primacy of originality and the prevalence of invention reigning since the late-nineteenth are juxtaposed and paradoxically coexist.

To ensure the consistency of the Victorian text, Fforde abducts Jane from the novel thereby making any interference with the story told in her first person narrative impossible. As the author confesses, it took him a three-year writer's block to arrive at this solution because he did not want to commit "literary heresy" by putting too many extra words in Jane's mouth (Fforde "Beginnings" 2000), a remark which resembles the preservative argument in the fidelity debate in film studies concerning text-film correspondences in heritage film. A similar imprinting also appears at the textual level when the twentieth-century readers protest about changes to their favourite Victorian novel caused by the abduction. Critics argue that Fforde's implied readers would probably have done the same, had the original canonised version not been maintained with the only addition of a parallel ironic perspective to it by recontextualising some of the plot moves (Rubik 2007: 175-179). As critics sustain, Fforde not only paid homage to the original storyline, but also to characters: Thursday Next shows remarkable similarities to Jane, and Landen resembles Rochester in

¹¹⁸ The concept of the manuscript has a similar status in *Charlotte* as well, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The fact that the finding, stealing, reacquiring and forging of a manuscript gains a central, plot-organising function in many post-Victorian novels, such as *Possession*, *The Eyre Affair* and *Charlotte*, can often be related to identity narratives of Englishness. The greatness of the English nation is proved by the possession of the original text, an important relic that should be kept in a safe place and not revealed or sold to others (See the analysis of individual novels for more details).

various respects as well (Wells 2007: 200-203). In addition, the two endings, both attributable to Charlotte Brontë due to the twists in the plot, function as a kind of homage raising the profile of the historical author and providing even more space for speculation concerning authorial creativity and intention. Hence, critics mostly read *The Eyre Affair* as an entertaining tribute to *Jane Eyre* which reinforces the canon (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 184, Wells 2007: 205-206). I think it could also be read as an allegory of the writing process, implying through the case of *Jane Eyre* how novels come into being or are continuously in the making, thus bringing the productive and receptive ends of the process closer, which indeed may affect long term canon formation. Besides illustrating writing, Fforde's text can also be translated as a satirical comment on the whole enterprise of rewriting: when the readership and the authorities notice that the ending has been revised, they regard the pastiche as "pure Charlotte Brontë but it *definitely* wasn't there before!" (Fforde 2003: 346). This remark sounds at least ambivalent, partly confirming characters, readers and critics' keenness on Brontë's original ending, but partly also emphasising that in the metafictional game of rewriting the "revision" to get the "original" these concepts lose their points of reference.

The political situation in which the plot is set emerges as strongly dystopian: England is a state constantly involved in wars and conflicts with its neighbours as well as other countries, and London is a city of criminals and detectives where nothing is sacred or safe, governed by dubious corporations similar to the ones in Barnes's *England, England*. The Crimean war gets fictionalised as one that has lasted for the past hundred and thirty years involving the testing of the cold war-like weapons of the corporation and dividing public opinion: agreeing with the industrial entrepreneurs, war veterans argue for its continuation until their final victory otherwise they feel that all the loss of lives was wasted, while others think that "[w]hat we began as an excuse to curb Russia's expansionism in 1854 [...] has collapsed over the years into nothing more than an exercise to maintain the nation's pride..." (Fforde 2003: 8). This exposes Britain's desperate clinging to its historical empire, further emphasised by the interventions of agents like Thursday's father, whose task involves the adjustment of historical events in favour of the British. Colonial and postimperial conflicts feature together: immediately after the television broadcast of the Crimean war, a report on the English-Welsh conflict follows. As an English-born novelist

having both lived and worked in Wales, Fforde pictures Wales as a socialist republic since 1854, independent from but constantly threatened and mistreated by England:

The next news item was about a border skirmish with the People's Republic of Wales; no one hurt, just a few shots exchanged across the River Wye near Hay.¹¹⁹ Typically rambunctious, the youthful president-for-life Owain Glyndwr VII had blamed England's imperialist yearnings for a unified Britain; equally typically, Parliament had not so much as even made a statement about the incident" (9).

This kind of fictional relationship between the currently two most connected countries in post-imperial Britain points towards the difficulties in working out new identities and forms of governance among entities left of the empire. In his *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain* (1998), Raphael Samuel provides some instances of a four nations-history that is to replace the so-far promoted Anglocentric one as a necessary consequence of the devolution of power that radically reconceptualises perceptions of history: "Anglo-Saxon England, which [...] was a precocious unity –the starting-point of 'our island story' and the foundation of representative government– is now seen as more of a hybrid, politically unstable, racially indeterminate, linguistically pluralist" (1999: 23). Jasper Fforde constructs such a history in *The Eyre Affair*. In addition to fictionalising the present fitting Samuel's description, he also invents Victorian events as they could have been and gives a detailed account of these on his webpage titled *The Socialist Republic of Wales* (Fforde "Sovietreppage" 2003d), which provides a good example of what Kaplan argues about the functioning of literary sources: "in the fantasmatic register in which literature operates an alternative history opens up, with a complicated narrative of its own, but one that is at the same time constitutive of the social real, representing most eloquently and sometimes scarily its affective dimensions" (2006: 211). Fforde reasons for his choice of Wales and the project of creating its alternative history as follows: "[i]n common with most English schoolchildren, I wasn't taught any Welsh history in school – nor Irish, either – I wonder

¹¹⁹ Hay-on-Wye is a symbolic location in terms of books with the possession of which the literary detectives in the novel are constantly occupied. The Welsh town is known for its abundance of second hand bookshops, even claiming to be the place that has the most books per square mile in the world (Henry „Hay-on-Wye" 2010: <http://lorihenry.ca/http://lorihenry.ca/04/wales-travel-hay-on-wye-bookshops-and-festival-in-the-uk/>).

why that was? The birth of trade unionism bad reading for schoolchildren?” (Fforde “Sovietreppage” 2003d).

The concept of island fiction can also be applied to the discussed (post)colonial and (post)imperial conflicts in a somewhat extended format both in temporal and spatial terms. Colonial struggles on the Crimean Peninsula appear in the surreal framework of time-travel and journeys into the space of fictional texts such as *Jane Eyre* take place, which is called book-travel (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 186). These latter journeys result in literary tourism not only to famous places connected to canonical works but also into the works themselves enabled by the so-called Prose Portal which is exclusively developed for this purpose. The trope of travel is also employed in connection with going from one country to another, namely England to Wales within the same island, that is, Britain. Thus the isolation in this text functions at a metaphorical as well as at a literal level. Therefore, the temporal disjunction between England in a state of crisis and (post)colonial regions as monuments of the successful empire nineteenth-century travel narratives assume (Gikandi 1996: 105) can be extended into both a temporal and a spatial disjunction in the case of *The Eyre Affair*. This way the historical novel is equipped with yet another tool to illustrate today's social and political discrepancies.

The role of the book as a cultural memento was already established in the second chapter. The function of Charlotte Brontë's novel in *The Eyre Affair* is very similar to the one of *Great Expectations* in *Mister Pip*: to reinstate the stolen *Jane Eyre* as a cultic item of English heritage, the Goliath Corporation managing England is willing to go to war with Wales harbouring the book and the Prose Portal allowing access to it, while Wales asks for Dylan Thomas's poems sitting in England but constituting their rightful possession to avoid warfare. The industrial company's main interest lies in the Prose Portal to enhance its profits, yet it utilizes cultural tools to reach its aims: it employs literary detectives and influences political situations with the help of literary works. The (dis)possession of certain texts may lead to political frictions or even the possibility of war, and since these political, economic and cultural organisations interact, this (dis)possession does not only serve as a camouflage for acquiring important patents, but also affects national and cultural identity-narratives. In addition to its political, cultural and individual fate-changing qualities, the book *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë also functions as an object of desire and as a protective

shield saving lives, thus assuming commodity and strongly material, even military functions. Most importantly, through the literary detective's interaction with Rochester and thus the plot of the Victorian novel, the book also adopts a dialogic function changing its status from a silent cultural memento to one that actively engages in influencing present-day events by utilising its potential as a historical narrative. Consequently, through its multiple roles, the book also offers possibilities of reading within the framework of identity discourses.

From a social aspect the novel shows both utopistic and dystopian characteristics: perceptions of love reproduce romance clichés in a criminal society governed by corrupt global industrial powers. Thursday and Landen's union in the twentieth-century plot reproduces Jane and Rochester's marriage with unlikely interventions and coincidences, while England features as an Orwellian police state full of crimes triggered by literature, cloning and time-travel as everyday realities and wars with ex-colonies and other island countries provoked for profits in the weapon industry by global economic powers. The fact that literary works are at the centre of attention, influencing political decisions and events as well as provoking violence, could be read as an attempt to reinstate literature as a powerful political tool and, certainly, further underlines the political power of books pointed out above. It always proves difficult to discuss feminist legacies when a male author revises texts by female authors, especially when the protagonist is also female. Examining *The Eyre Affair*, one also confronts the feminist-postfeminist dilemma. Besides pointing out that Thursday and Rochester interact as equals all through the novel (Wells 2007: 205), feminist critics also underline that even if Jane largely features as a silent background figure because of the author's fear of intervening in a popular canonical text, Fforde nevertheless "pays tribute to the boldness and originality of Brontë's fictional creation" by reinventing Jane as Thursday (Wells 2007: 199). On the contrary, postfeminist critics claim that while the original ending of *Jane Eyre* provided at the beginning of *The Eyre Affair*, where, differently from Charlotte Brontë's version, Jane starts a career in India that makes her a role model for Thursday, would be a feminist move, the fact that this ending is reversed by the twentieth-century protagonist followed by her own utopistic marriage validates the ending of the Victorian novel: "it emphasises the continuous importance of love, marriage, and family *even* for a strong, independent woman" (Wehrmann 2007: 162-163, emphasis mine). This emerging strange contrast of the needs

of women with careers to those without probably stems from the unclear definition of postfeminism. Initially the critic depicts postfeminism as a pluralist and dynamic amendment to the second wave of feminism in the eighties (150), which view he modifies in his conclusion to regarding it as an ambiguous concept. In terms of *The Eyre Affair* this means that the novel is evaluated as a highly regressive fantasy at the same time as it is judged radical for raising “legitimate questions about feminist assumptions and limiting gender roles propagated by the movement” (163). Wehrmann finally concludes that Fforde’s text still demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling women’s families and careers, which partly explains his use of “even” in the above quote but renders his postfeminist reading less convincing. The other delicate item in this respect seems to be Bertha’s fate. Her death is caused by the interference of Jane’s abductor setting Thornfield on fire, changing Bertha’s last suicidal act of revenge into her coincidentally becoming the victim of a murder. Critics note the thus emerging revision of her rage advocated by feminists, but they interpret it as a proof of *The Eyre Affair*’s purpose being entertainment and not correction in contrast to that of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 189, footnote 20). Not accepting this argument so willingly, I think there may be a connection between the comic mode and the inattention to, or rejection of, the feminist agenda, possibly putting the novel into a postfeminist or even antifeminist theoretical framework.¹²⁰

Concerning its genre, *The Eyre Affair* is characterised as genre-busting (Fforde 2003a: blurb). The text shows resemblances with comedy and film-scripts, especially observable in Fforde’s writing style and plot moves some of which seem like film cuts. Some critics compare the different fictional worlds of *The Eyre Affair* with the split realities in film production as well (Berninger and Thomas 2007: 192). The novel also blends elements of the Gothic, realism, romance and the fairy tale, yet detective and science-fiction serve as its most popular generic categories (Wehrmann 2007: 149, Berninger and Thomas 2007: 186). The novel appropriates the typical dark urban scenery of Victorian London as a well-defined period landscape and its plot is based on unravelling mysteries and bloody crimes amply confirming critics’ claim that in such rewritings killing is cute (Sweet 2001: 74).

¹²⁰ The question whether the connection between male authorship and the trivialisation of feminist issues implies an ideological authorial bias, a yield to the demand of popular entertainment or has other reasons, is a topic out of the scope of this paper but definitely worth exploring. This problem also acquires relevance in reading D.M. Thomas’s *Charlotte* analysed in the previous chapter.

With the action happening simultaneously in the alternative world of Britain in the 1980s and the fictional world of the novel *Jane Eyre* aided by motifs like time-travel and genetic engineering the text reads as an alternative history fantasy. It certainly also has many comic moments trivialising nineteenth-century romance and Gothic elements. Thursday's intervention in the plot of *Jane Eyre* provides one such example, supplying a paradoxical explanation to the scene generally perceived as melodramatic: the supernatural call that makes Jane return to Rochester is her imitation: "I had found her at the Riverses' house, gone to her window and barked: "Jane, Jane, Jane!" in a hoarse whisper the way that Rochester did. It wasn't a good impersonation but it did the trick. I saw Jane start to fluster and pack almost immediately" (Fforde 2003a: 347). Rochester's view as a Byronic hero receives a similarly comic bent when it turns out that in Jane's absence from Thornfield he guides twentieth-century literary tourists through the house to make some extra money, and the Christian tradition is questioned as a vampire politely warns Thursday that satanic creatures are not afraid of the Christian cross any more since they come from a multicultural background (Rubik 2007: 175-178 and Berninger and Thomas 2007: 188-189). These elements demonstrate how novelistic conventions popular in the nineteenth century become at once reinforced and revised in current adaptations.

Viewing genre preferences from the aspects of popularity and commercial considerations, there is a good chance that post-Victorian science, detective, and even graphic novels will continue to flourish. Graphic novels resolve the length and language constraints of old Victorian texts by adapting them into short image-dominated pieces, making this genre as popular as the similarly digested Dickens instalments in the form of published or televised series mentioned earlier. Critics also underline that comics are often anti-establishment thereby adding to the subversive body of post-Victorian fiction (Boehnke, 2008), yet, since they work with canonical pieces of literature, they subvert as well as reinforce the canon. An example of this paradoxical feature would be the items published by the Classic Comic Store: *Jane Eyre* comics have appeared there in six different versions in the Classics Illustrated series (<http://classicsillustrated.classiccomicstore.com/search.asp>). Possibly largely overlapping with the previously introduced category of island fiction, adventure fiction may equally prosper in the post-Victorian context also interfering with utopias and dystopias as articulations of escapism or visions of a dark future of chaos and loss. Where do we go from here? I would like to conclude this chapter with the suggestion that an

ongoing proliferation of post-Victorian novels in English prioritising biofiction, island fiction and the novel sequel as well as extending their generic scale to include the generic hybridity just described is to be expected as ways to approach pressing contemporary political, social, cultural and theoretical issues. These explorations of the listed issues of importance will considerably influence the production and reception of literary texts as well. It remains to be seen how these developments impact the recontextualisation of post-Victorian fiction into the larger body of contemporary British novels, what seems quite certain, however, is that the future increasingly belongs to the rewrites of the rewrites. As Hutcheon phrases it, “[i]n the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception” (2006: 177). Geoffrey Braithwaite, the narrator of *Flaubert’s Parrot* lists adventure, island and postcolonial fiction among the types of novels to be banned in the future and he wishes the same fate for adaptations:

[t]here shall be no more novels which are really about other novels. No ‘modern versions’, reworkings, sequels of prequels. No imaginative completions of works left unfinished on their author’s death. Instead, every writer is to be issued with a sampler in coloured wools to hang over the fireplace. It reads: Knit Your Own Stuff (Barnes, 1990: 99).

Considering that Barnes has gone against his own rules, more precisely, “Braithwaite’s Rules”, shows that this list of forbidden types of novels was meant ironically, even so, it is a rather exact compilation of what generic experiments have taken place since the eighties and what may be expected in future manifestations of post-Victorian fiction.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have examined texts and contexts of post-Victorian fiction. My aim was to situate this increasing body of novels in contemporary literary and cultural criticism surveying the theoretical and ideological debates they incite or join. Since post-Victorian fiction is inspired by historical correspondences, first I conducted a diachronic case study of a chronological chain of novels to demonstrate how fictional texts and their criticism have evolved and then I scrutinised current trends in the production and reception of such works to show their present status as well as their possible future developments.

As current research on the post-Victorian phenomenon would benefit from a comprehensive account of the range and methodological transparency of possible critical responses to novelistic rewritings, my main focus in Chapter 1 has been on systematising terminology, contexts and discourses related to post-Victorian fiction. Reviewing the competing terms and definitions of postmodern rewritings of Victorian texts, I argued that it is the term *post-Victorian fiction* that most accurately depicts the body of novels in question. For grouping novels that address history in a traditional or a paradoxical way terms like *historical novel* or *historiographic metafiction* (Onega and Gutleben 2004) prove necessary in a generic sense, but they do not specify the age that is being refashioned. The term *Victoriography* (Wolfreys 2001) confirms that reworkings of Victorian texts belong to the already established postmodern discourse of historiographical metafiction, yet, just like *Victoriana* (Kaplan 2007), a word originally denoting objects from the Victorian era, it conjures a broader frame of reference than just the fictional, since it relates to various representations, not only novels. *Neo-* and *retro-Victorian fiction* are the most widely and even interchangeably used terms by scholars (Shiller 1997, Shuttleworth 1998, Gutleben 2001, Bormann 2002, Kohlke 2008), which seems a consensual but largely unreflected critical practice. The flexibility of their definition does not assist in trying to delimit the area of research. They both foreground the notion *Victorian*, so much so that some scholars view this area of study as one that mainly provides new insights about the Victorian era (Llewellyn 2008). Hence in the prefixes *neo-* and *retro-* the relationship of the signified texts to the postmodern context appears only implicitly and requires more elaboration. In contrast to these, the term *post-Victorian fiction* (Kucich and Sadoff 2001, Letissier 2004) encompasses a more explicit reference to the postmodern context. I claimed

that this term seems the most suitable to date for the following reasons. Firstly, just like *Victorian*, it displays nuances in both the historical and the aesthetic realms. Secondly, *post-Victorian* comprises both the Victorian and the current historical settings without immediately taking a stance on the hierarchy of the eras. Thirdly, similarly to the terms postcolonial or postimperial, it expresses an intention of revision rather than that of a repetition of earlier narratives. Fourthly, the fact that *post-Victorian* may embrace the Victorian, the modernist and the postmodernist eras, points towards the integrative nature of this term which blends in with the interdisciplinarity of research in the subject.

Delineating contexts and discourses of post-Victorian fiction, I have shown how various research areas, such as literary-, film- and adaptation studies or cultural memory, trauma- and cultural studies, intersect. I underlined the research benefit of these overlaps, as it may not only yield new models of interpreting post-Victorian novels, but also incite some theoretical and practical adjustments in various fields. My analysis of Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988) in Chapter 2 revealed how the postcolonial reading of the novel, the cultural criticism and cultural memory accounts of the Crystal Palace amend one another. Hence the juxtaposition of various cultural objects with narratives of individual and collective cultural memory emerges as a new interpretive tool in understanding narratives of identity in post-Victorian texts, which I exemplified on two additional novels, Gail Jones's *Sixty Lights* (2004) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006). I also maintained that, just like many of its Victorian source texts did, post-Victorian fiction assists in bridging the gap between the so-called high and low culture as well as academic and popular criticism. The reading of such novels enhances a productive dialogue between high and mass culture, which I demonstrated by a brief survey of book cover designs. I attributed the popularity of post-Victorian fiction and its criticism to their capacity of providing fruitful discursive sites for diverse ideological schools on a wide spectrum of disciplines and audiences. I argued that post-Victorian fiction also marks some current changes in postmodernism through its synthesising tendencies. It fosters a compromise or a juxtaposition of the paradoxes of postmodernism as the co-existence of traditional and experimental uses of Victorian fiction in such rewritings and in their criticism proves. In addition, post-Victorian fiction and the critical paradigms utilised for their analysis, show how these texts and applied contexts modify the exclusively text-centred postmodernist approaches to reading by refocusing empirical realities and historical referentiality.

This concurrence of postmodern paradoxes causes duplicity in responding to questions of originality, authenticity and plagiarism in and about post-Victorian fiction. The general perception of postmodern novels as rewritings of earlier texts implies that these questions should not apply any longer, especially in the case of adaptations which often refashion more than one original, purposely copy-pasting extracts from various source texts. Yet, both in post-Victorian novels and in their criticism these issues re-emerge as debatable. Jean Rhys voices authorial anxieties of capitalising on Charlotte Brontë's nineteenth-century cult text, which turn into public accusations of plagiarism and exploitation of the literary market in receptions of D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000). I analysed how the novel *Charlotte* fictionalises such literary scandal of ventriloquising, by focusing on originality, copyright and forgery in a playful manner. Similarly, I sustained that Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001), which provides us with an original ending of *Jane Eyre* (1847) that is different from Charlotte Brontë's, making readers believe that Brontë's original ending is already an alternative one, reads as a satirical comment on the whole enterprise of rewriting that would fan the adoration of characters, readers and critics on Brontë's version, but also emphasise that in the metafictional game of rewriting the "revision" to get the "original" these concepts lose their points of reference. This duplicity also affects the classification of post-Victorian responses to Victorian texts, especially in terms of establishing their relationship to their sources. As I stated in Chapter 1, *fluidity* (Bryant 2002) and *literary continuum* (Knight and Stoneman 2004) allow for a non-judgemental characterisation of these connections, whereas terms like *aftering* (Humpherys 2005) indicate the secondary nature of adaptations and other generally used ones, such as *prequel*, *sequel*, *midquel* or *parallelquel*, presuppose the existence of an original that enjoys a temporal priority. The same applies to the category *adaptive series* which contains items refashioning the same source text in a chronological order. I utilised a slightly modified version of this term, *adaptive chain* for the texts I analysed in Chapter 3, since in the consecutive list of novels *Jane Eyre*–*Wide Sargasso Sea*–*Charlotte* the later items contain all the previous ones. Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*, novels I scrutinised in Chapter 4, both rewrite the same original, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) in ways that can be related to each other, so they may be read as part of an adaptive series or mapped as independent refashionings of one source text. The term *adaptive map* serves to collect this multiplicity of contested interferences of novels, which I illustrated by a

description of various refashionings of Dickens's life and work commonly called Dickensiana. Some works acquire a double function in the world of sequels: *The Eyre Affair*, for example, constitutes both an item on the adaptive map of *Jane Eyre* and a first instance of the series of the adventures of the literary detective Thursday Next.

In line with the less experimental and more referential, less text- and more author-based phase of postmodernism post-Victorian fiction also marks, refashionings of historical writers have acquired a great degree of popularity. As I maintained in Chapter 2, the lack of political and social models in the present age explains the renewed emphasis on the author fuelling the production and reception of novels centralising such a figure. This reinstatement of authorship together with its ensuing discourses of authority, authenticity, mystification and cult takes place in similar ways as was customary in the nineteenth century. Examining the *Jane Eyre*–*Wide Sargasso Sea*–*Charlotte* adaptive chain of novels in Chapter 3, I explained how the author function intertwined with that of the character-narrator becomes crucial in recent readings of the three novels. Literary biographies also flourish as a result of recentring the writer. Surveying five Henry James adaptations published around the same time in Chapter 4, I argued that the venture of rewriting Victorian authors could itself be read as a symbolic move of restoring authorship into the central position it assumed in the nineteenth century. The novels, Emma Tennant's *Felony* (2002), Colm Tóbin's *The Master* (2004), David Lodge's *Author Author* (2004), Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) and Michiel Heyns's *The Typewriter's Tale* (2005) as well as the ensuing authorial and critical reactions show the interaction of literary biographies and criticism concerning the writing process, the limits of artistic compromise, the consequences of intellectual theft and ghostwriting historical authors, literary reception and reactions to literary reception. This intersection, called biofiction, offers a joint interpretive site for fiction, theory and criticism. From my analysis of *The Eyre Affair* it also emerged how much the author, the reader and the literary market interact in today's production and reception of post-Victorian rewritings. Through utilising the tools of comedy, utopia, dystopia and science fiction, the most popular generic directions post-Victorian fiction seems to take, Fforde's novel at the same time reinforces and shifts the romance–realism debate about the ending of *Jane Eyre* towards the economic realm of commodity culture.

The emphasis on history in post-Victorian novels foregrounds the issue of how contemporary Britain faces its colonial and imperial legacies, which constituted the topic of Chapter 2. I read the last thirty years of post-Victorian output together with instances of cultural criticism to see how various narratives of identity were forged in a climate of changing political rhetoric. Examining how discourses of internal and external colonisation are activated in Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983) and Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* and fears of reverse colonisation get voiced in Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988), A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) and Swift's *Ever After* (1992), I concluded that the articulation of facing colonial follies in the post-Victorian fiction of the 1980s and 1990s partially reinforced the imperial discourse it opposed. I established that the question of self and home are closely related in the texts of the novelistic chain I analysed in Chapter 3 and I pursued how characters' dislocation determines shifts in their self-, national and cultural identifications. In Chapter 4 I identified island fiction as a specific subgenre within post-Victorian fiction that offers dislocation and travel, also characteristic of the adaptation process itself, as constructive tools assisting in the reconceptualisation of current postimperial and postcolonial identities. I studied Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000) by juxtaposing concepts of eighteenth-century discovery narratives, nineteenth-century travelogues and Simon Gikandi's trope of travel (1996). I argued that the crisis within Britain that Gikandi regards a crucial motivating factor for travel in the nineteenth century resurfaces as the main reason for travelling into the "history of" the empire in post-Victorian fiction. These novels reveal contemporary existential anxieties of loss of home and identity resulting from Britain's insularity and isolation through exposing inter-island journeys of ownership within the empire as failures.

The final section of my conclusion is devoted to possible future research directions in mapping out the post-Victorian phenomenon. Since post-Victorian fiction and Neo-Victorian Studies constitute a relatively new research focus and field, it belongs to critics' primary tasks to delineate their key terminology and apparatus. As it is apparent from the abundance of terms used in related scholarly work, the diverging terms denoting the same area of interest require harmonisation. In the first chapter I suggested and reasoned for *post-Victorian* as the most suitable term at present to denote the body of novels in question, but since *neo-Victorian* seems equally widely used it would definitely merit a more

thorough theorisation for which there was no space in this work. In addition to separating its political and temporal aspects, the wider cultural connotations of the neo-phenomenon deserve some attention as well. Then the neo-Victorian novel together with other similar movements in literature and sister arts could also be situated in this context, establishing their correspondence to the postmodern. The ideological aspects of analysis covered in the second chapter seem to echo the same terminological problem: which categorisation is most appropriate for relating post-Victorian fiction to current social and political discourses? My framing of post-Victorian novels summoned terms like postimperial, postcolonial and (post)feminist for their contextualisation within the paradigm of the postmodern, but together with researching into implications of the neo-phenomenon, other frameworks may emerge exchanging the prefix post- to those of neo-, retro-, reverse- and even trans- to survey narratives of identity in the body of texts in question. The outcomes would indicate whether there are noteworthy theoretical repercussions worth analysing or the abundance of applied terms signals the tiring out of postmodern critical discourses pointing towards new critical frameworks with new terms.

The fate of identity narratives constitutes a similarly exciting question for further research. As I argued in the second chapter, the present inclination in reading seems to be towards idiosyncrasies in accounting for imperial, colonial and feminist legacies. This leads to the refraction and individuation of stories enriching the narrative palette with recontextualising effaced perspectives on historical events. What will happen to these narratives later? Will they stay as they are (re)discovered or are we to expect attempts at their collectivisation and systematisation? In the case of the former scenario can Mardorossian's relationality theory (2005), also utilised in this dissertation, assist in the interpretation of these refractions and if yes what theoretical changes would that lead to? Does the latter scenario of systematisation follow the former one integrating theoretical changes? If it does not, then what new criteria of theorising narratives could emerge instead? Can relationality theory be connected to the interest in the disintegration and dislocation of self, nation or culture with specific attention to their temporal and spatial aspects? As the discussions of time and book travel and other types of spatialisation of personal and historical experience in the last chapter indicate, recent trends in writing and reading post-Victorian fiction may point

towards such possible modernist concerns.¹²¹ If future appropriations of historical material shift to an interest in modernist authors, techniques and issues, what does it say about current theoretical and ideological concerns and how will it inform the postmodern? Will this all-integrative potential of post-Victorian fiction still be contained in the postmodernist movement or can it split its boundaries and become something else? Whichever way, this quality of the postmodern and its theoretical schools of repossessing previous literary eras, as described in the final chapter, invites further research, possibly yielding interesting ideological and aesthetic consequences and future directions for understanding the phenomenon of rewriting.

Another way to identify possible theoretical changes could be the extension of the case studies and the interdisciplinarity of their analysis. The examination of adaptations and motif appropriations of *Jane Eyre* accomplished in the third chapter can be further expanded in many directions. The development of the motif-analysis introduced at the end of the chapter would provide interesting results as to how different Victorian concepts are perceived at present, which authors rewrite these concepts and in which critical frameworks are these works read. The drawing of the adaptive map of the most popular female historical authors, Jane Austen and the Brontës seems a similarly exciting project which could then be juxtaposed with today's seminal women writers and the topics as well as subgeneric novelistic conventions they resuscitate. Charles Dickens and his work constitute an equally intriguing case study subject. As it emerges from my dissertation, the examination of the rewritings of this emblematic nineteenth-century figure and his texts could provide valuable insights concerning the interrelatedness of various critical frameworks of analysis. Dickens and his oeuvre promote a constant dialogue between literary and cultural studies; therefore it seems worthwhile to extend the research scope for the interpretation of related refashionings. In addition to literary responses, film adaptations, songs, websites and cultural mementoes may be included into elucidating post-Victorian rewritings of his life and novels, which would incite the expansion of critical

¹²¹ This interest in spatialising personal and historical experience seems to be happening on a wider scale than post-Victorian fiction. A number of contemporary novels from Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000) or *Thames: Sacred River* (2007) to Klaus Bödl's *Die fernen Inseln* [*The Distant Islands*] (2003) or *Drei Flüsse* [*Three Rivers*] (2006) connect remembering and space by fictionalising the history of cities, islands or rivers, not to mention the theoretical interest in the visualisation and verbalisation of historical and lived spaces which is focalised in various genres and disciplines from travel writing, through ethnography to urban studies.

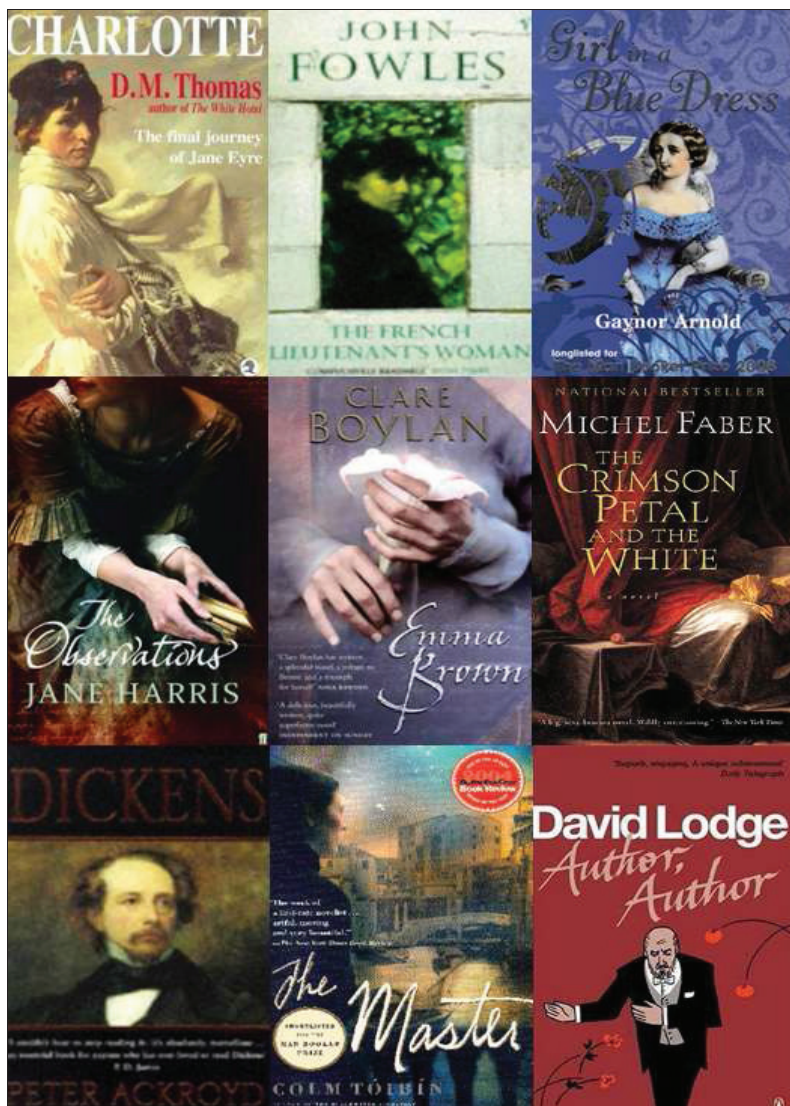
frameworks of reading as well. Such a possible integration of literary, adaptation, film, media and cultural studies could lead to a better understanding of the post-Victorian phenomenon and further enhance interdisciplinary research as a working method.

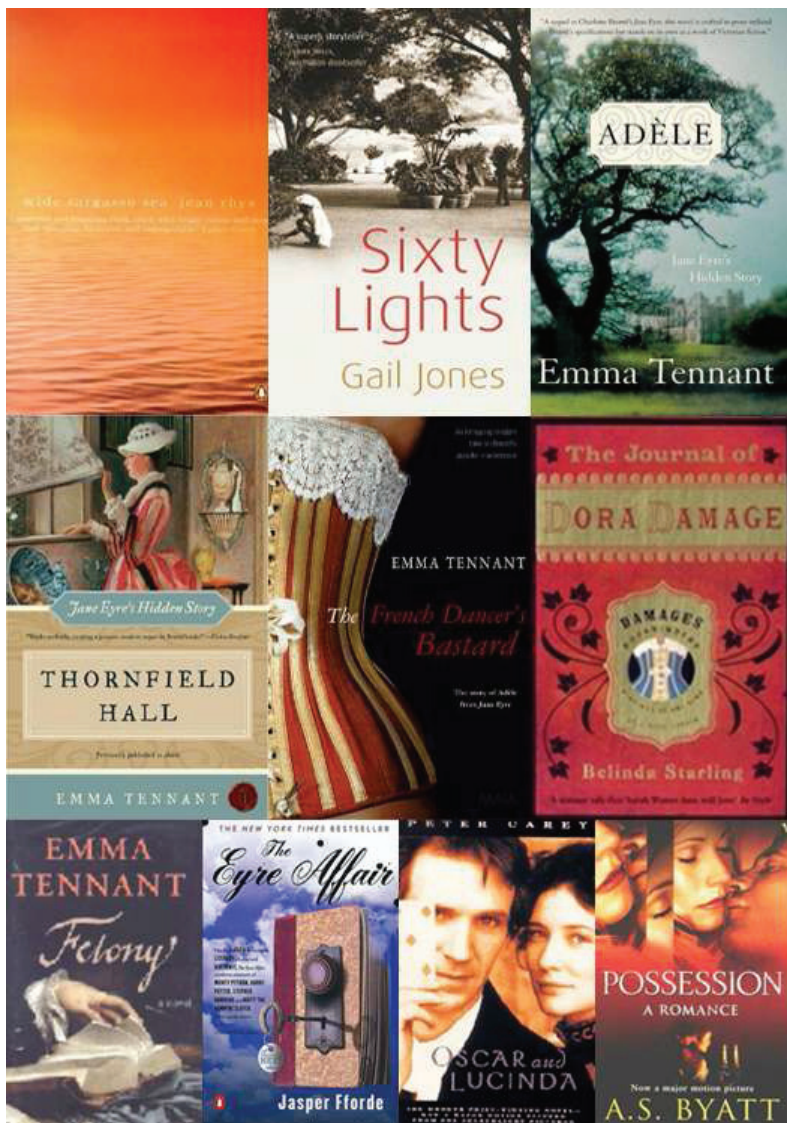
Reading post-Victorian fiction through the prevalent topics and genres it revives or employs may also be revealing, as indicated in the final chapter. I mainly concentrated on narratives of identity related to colonial and imperial legacies in my work, but scrutinising the fictionalisation of urban and rural spaces, industrialisation, morals, sexuality or the religion-science dichotomy would result in equally important revelations that enriched existing accounts of literary and social history. These topical foci could be accompanied by studying the revival of novelistic subgenres flourishing in the nineteenth century and by examining their intersection with presently popular novelistic forms. Reinforcements of and renewals to the industrial and condition of England novels, provincial and regional fiction, sensation and detective fiction and the *Bildungsroman* would then be read together with dystopias, science fiction, utopias and graphic novels, possibly summoning new thematic and critical propositions. Finally, the reasons for the popularity of historical fiction itself could be explored in more detail as indicated in the first chapter, by scrutinising its political potentials and the ends and audiences it has served since its emergence. As a comparative study, the findings of this dissertation could be weighed against the wider context of the European, and particularly Hungarian historical fiction of the present¹²² to find explanations for its popularity as well as to establish which cultures rewrite which eras and why.

¹²² Bényei outlines the possibilities of a comparison between contemporary British and Hungarian historical novels in his „Történelem és emlékezés a kortárs történelmi regényben” [History and Remembering in the Contemporary Historical Novel]. *Alföld* 2005 március, 37-47; and there is equally great potential in reading today's German historical fiction, especially works by the already mentioned Daniel Kehlmann and Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm* [The Tower] that won the German Book Prize in 2008.

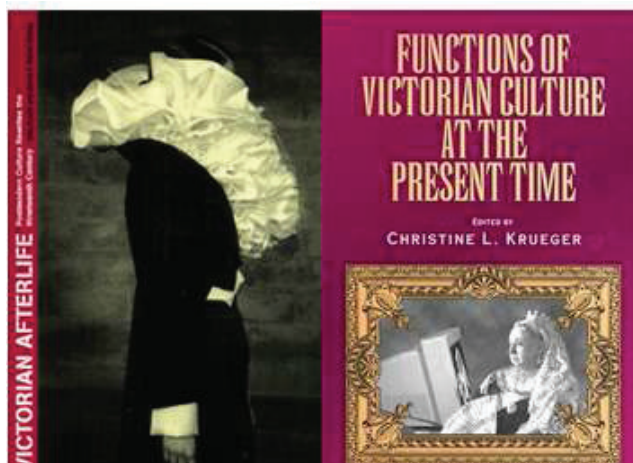
Appendix

Appendix 1.1





Appendix 1.2



Appendix 1.3



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